

*Government Orders*

Or, as we have heard time and time again from this side of the House, is it merely window-dressing?

My constituents, many people from southern Ontario and across this land know too well the tragedies that have befallen too many area residents in the recent past. Their names are painfully familiar: Klaudusz, Mahaffy, de Villiers, Anderson, Edwards, French.

The provisions of Bill C-36 cover parole and temporary absences of all inmates. What Canadians are really concerned about are dangerous offenders being released from prison on day passes, escorted or unescorted temporary absence. There is ample evidence of persons who, while at large from a penitentiary, have committed various violent acts that could have been avoided by detaining inmates until the expiration of their sentences.

As I have stated before, not all inmates are in prison for violent crimes, nor will many be repeat offenders. However, this bill, Bill C-36, does not afford society the protection it deserves.

On June 29, 1987 a penitentiary inmate by the name of Daniel Gingras escaped an escorted temporary absence while visiting the West Edmonton Mall for the occasion of his birthday. What an ideal place to wander off and make good an escape. Daniel Gingras was later apprehended by the police but only after murdering two people, for which he was later convicted of first degree murder on both counts.

Members of this House may also remember Allan Legere, who terrorized the Miramichi region of New Brunswick after having escaped while on escorted temporary absence in Moncton, New Brunswick. Legere was eventually convicted of murder as a result of his attacks after having escaped.

There are other individuals who, while not murderers, have nonetheless been convicted of serious offences such as sexual assault, which society today is demanding it be protected from. Bill C-36 does not offer any consolation, nor does it protect society as the minister suggests.

Half of the question of the protection of society cannot even be addressed at this point because of the absence of corresponding sentencing legislation. By moving certain time periods for mandatory release and temporary absences upwards, the minister is trying to toy with the

notion of sentencing in only an indirect way. This is what Canadians have been asking for some time now.

They do not want dangerous offenders let loose on the streets on day passes. They do not want temporary absences and day parole made so readily available.

At the time the minister introduced this bill, he said the Minister of Justice would be bringing in some changes to sentencing. So far this House can only rely on the half-hearted measures contained in this bill.

The bill attempts to draw a line through first time non-violent offenders and repeat dangerous offenders. More clearly, the bill tries to distinguish offences such as break and enter, robbery, violent sexual assaults and murder. For the so-called first time offender, the bill creates a revolving door through which these classes of inmates will go.

My colleague from Scarborough, the critic for the Solicitor General Official Opposition described it best when he noted that first time non-violent offenders will be mandatorily paroled after serving one-third of their sentence even if the National Parole Board believes they will commit further non-violent offences. Talk about a rubber stamp.

This measure of mandatory release for first time non-violent offenders is one of the major parts of this bill. I ask this House, does this measure promote public safety as the minister has repeatedly stated? They are non-violent offences, after all. We are talking about house break-ins, for example.

Let us turn our attention to this for a moment because more than one constituent in my riding of Hamilton West has put the following scenario to me. What happens when a thief is alone in the house and unexpectedly the homeowner returns after an evening out? What ensues? What could happen in the heat of the moment when the thief with the TV set or the stereo system under his or her arm encounters the homeowners? Would he drop it, politely say excuse me and walk out the door? Maybe a fight will occur and then the incident does become violent.

Obviously the minister is running the risk of an incident like this happening again because of releasing the inmate after only one-third of his or her sentence, thereby increasing the odds of a violent offence.