

Private Members' Business

we as a Canadian family care about what happened to them.

My observation of the Hilliers is that this is really what is missing. They feel rejected by their own country because it has failed to respond in any way to what has happened to them. They have been turned away at every door they have come to for assistance. They agreed to make their case public because they wanted to tell a story in the hope that their pain could lead to some diminution of the pain of others who may suffer the same thing in the future.

I am really speaking for them when I ask the House not only to agree to this bill but to give it an opportunity to be discussed in detail as to the mechanics in committee. It will not cost Canada anything to take a look at this plan and to give it an opportunity to be considered in detail, to give the Hilliers and others an opportunity to come to the committee and offer their testimony and their witnesses. It would be a healing act for them and for others who have suffered without this kind of protection to be given an opportunity to do that.

• (1120)

I ask the House to endorse the bill. I appreciate very much the work that others have done to support this bill. At one point I got the great assistance of Professor John McLaren and students at the University of Victoria in providing a lot of the background material. I have a file full of material on the concept that has led to this bill.

I think it is a good bill. I appreciate the support that colleagues have already offered to me in private conversations and I look forward to their support in this debate.

Mr. Stan Wilbee (Delta): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Victoria on his presentation and the thought that has gone into the development of what I believe to be a very important and significant bill. I can sympathize with the Hilliers. I have a number of patients of my own who were victims of a hit and run accident in Spain and suffered medical injuries as a result of that very tragic accident.

However, what we are dealing with today is a question of jurisdiction as to who is to be responsible for the development of the law, where it is going to originate, and who is going to be responsible ultimately for the

payment of this whole remuneration for injuries received while out of the country.

This proposed Bill C-310 which deals with the compensation for Canadian victims of crime while travelling or posted abroad cannot really be enacted without prior consultation with the provinces. Health care traditionally is a responsibility of the provinces. Since none of the provinces have requested this type of a bill and no one has come forward until this time with this concept, it brings up this whole question of jurisdiction.

Because Canadian citizens are provincial and territorial residents, these governments must be consulted with regard to such an important issue. Not to engage in meaningful consultations with our provincial colleagues to seek their support would be considered unacceptable and an infringement of provincial jurisdiction. It should be noted that provincial governments have already enacted legislation which the member for Victoria discussed, making possible the granting of financial compensation to victims of criminal acts within their own provinces.

Provincial laws cannot be applied outside their boundaries. A province that wishes to provide compensation to its citizens who have been victims of criminal acts abroad would have to request that the federal government enact legislation along the lines of Bill C-310 to give extraterritorial effect to their laws. This is why it is so essential that the legislation be considered and brought forward together with the provinces rather than in the present nature of a private member's bill.

The intention behind this bill, as I think we all agree, is commendable. The story of the Hilliers certainly develops a sympathy and an understanding, but the request should be coming from the provinces rather than the federal government. It is my understanding that competent federal authorities have not been approached by their provincial counterparts. Furthermore, adoption of Bill C-310 without provincial consent would be inappropriate at this time.

Hon. members will be aware that the federal government through the Departments of External Affairs and International Trade provides assistance to Canadian citizens travelling and living abroad. This is being done by Canadian representatives at more than 120 different missions around the globe. The presenter of the bill