

*Supply*

It is incumbent on us to get serious about turning our justice system to the protection of the citizens and innocent people.

**Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, one of my favourite poets is Shakespeare. One of the soliloquies from "Macbeth" talks about sound and fury signifying nothing. We have a lot to learn from Shakespeare because talk is cheap and action and hard work are the real tests.

When we talk about being concerned about victims we have to listen to victims when they come before us. This is a day when in the other place we will have a vote on gun control.

I remember as vice-chair of the justice committee the victims coming before us on gun control, the victims groups saying how badly they needed the legislation. I remember the suicide experts coming before us saying how badly this legislation was needed. I remember the women's groups coming before us saying how badly they needed this legislation. There is work to be done.

We have done work in the government. We have talked about balancing rights. We do not put one right above another when public safety is the issue, and that is the issue. It is not whom we rank in order. There is a realistic need to address the problems in society.

The party opposite thinks the way to address problems is to single out notorious, terrible events. These events are terrible and there are great losses. However, there is no ownership on caring for victims in society by any one of the parties in the House. We all care about victims in society.

The difference is that when we care, we roll up our sleeves and do some real work. We look at real facts. We voted for the legislation that puts gun control in place because the victims asked for it. We voted for the legislation on sentencing because it gives an ability for the victims to go to the courts to get compensation. We go and we get victim impact statements at hearings.

• (1700)

The Reform Party can find some little place in these pieces of legislation where they do not care about those bills and they vote them down. The victims count. CAVEAT, a national organization, met this week in Hamilton, and where did it rate the provinces that take the attitude that is closest to the third party? It rated them as a *d* in Alberta and a *d* in Ontario. Where did it rate our minister? It rated him up there because he has the fortitude to stand behind a bill that will do something for victims.

What we need to figure out here is who is really working. Who is working when we have victims of misuse of firearms? Who is working when we have victims of family violence? I remember

comments on December 6 last year from the other side. It has no understanding of family abuse.

We have bills that bring sexual offenders now to the ends of their terms. We have improved the Young Offenders Act and we will do more. We take DNA evidence. They came alongside on that, and that is good. Maybe that is a real vision for the future, looking at a bill and making sure it works and helping us implement it.

The Reform Party did support the drunkenness defence bill, but today it likes to forget that we did that bill. That helps victims.

I wish I had 20 minutes, because I have a lot more to say on this issue. Behind the scenes we will do the real work and not just push the trigger buttons.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I am absolutely delighted to hear the passion with which the member opposite commits to helping victims. I would like to give her and her government suggestions as to what we could do to increase the rights of victims.

We could give them a right to restitution from the offender. We could give them a right to prompt return of property. These are rights they do not now have. We could give them the right to be informed of services to help them in the trauma they have experienced. We could give them the right to information and notification in a whole range of areas, which I would be very happy to supply to the member. We can give them a right to be heard by the crown and a right to be heard throughout the judicial process.

We could give them a right to privacy, a protection from unnecessary invasions of privacy; a right to refuse to be interviewed by defence counsel; a right to waiting areas in the court buildings that are separate from those used by the accused; a right to be free from intimidation; a right to have a prompt disposition of prosecutions; a right to be informed of victims' rights; a right to an explanation of their role and the scope and progress of the proceedings.

There are a whole range of areas where we can help victims in very practical ways.

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, this month marks the second anniversary of the period during which it has been my privilege to serve the Prime Minister and the government as Minister of Justice. During that time there have been no experiences that have left deeper impressions on me and there has been no work that has been more important to me than those occasions on which I have met with victims of crime, spoken to family members who survive others who have died as a result of crime and heard from them about their perception of justice and the justice system.