

*Criminal Code*

on justice for victims of crime. It is stated in that report that beyond compensation the services which would appear to be the most widely needed by victims are those which help them in coping with the effects of victimization, for example, the work of transition houses, rape crisis centres, the provision of crisis intervention services, the training of workers in the system to recognize and respond to the needs of victims, and helping the victims financially where loss and suffering has been incurred.

I take advantage of this opportunity to say a few words about Bill C-89 and again to call upon my colleagues on all sides of the House and, indeed, members of the Cabinet and members of the Government, in this time of financial restraint and cut-backs to be aware of the very necessary and important role that is played by so many governmental and non-governmental agencies, many of which exist on federal subsidies and other financial assistance in assisting victims of crime. It would be a shame that on the one hand we would take an important symbolic step to recognize the needs of victims while on the other, because of constraints, we would see some of the dollars available to non-governmental agencies such as rape crisis centres and so on disappear. This, too, is important for victims of crime.

With those remarks, Madam Speaker, I offer the support of the justice critic of the Liberal Party and, indeed, of the Official Opposition with respect to Bill C-89.

**Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby):** Madam Speaker, some 2,005 years ago the great Athenian legislator Solon said that there can be no justice until those of us who are unaffected by crime become as indignant as those who are. I think those words should echo today in the House as we consider the legislation which the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn) has put before the House at second reading today, Bill C-89.

I want to say that my colleagues and I in the New Democratic Party strongly support the principle of this legislation and, indeed, believe that it is long overdue. As the spokesperson on justice for the New Democratic Party I have called for many years now for effective steps to be taken to ease the trauma that victims of crime and the families of victims of crime too often suffer at the hands of the criminal justice system. Too often victims of crime are doubly victimized, once by the perpetrator of the crime, and subsequently by the criminal justice system which is too often callous and indifferent to their concerns.

It is because of the fundamental concern that victims have been forgotten by those in the criminal justice system for far too long, too often stripped of their dignity and respect, that we believe that this legislation is long overdue. We support it in principle.

The statistics are staggering. Each year in Canada some 700 families are victimized by murder, some, 2500 more lose someone to a drunk driver, and over 100,000 Canadians suffer, enduring emotional trauma and scars as a result of crime.

Many, many more lose their property or are victims of breaking and entering. In fact, one in six Canadian households will be the victim of a crime in Canada today. However, only a tiny fraction of these victims receive any kind of recognition or compensation.

Effectively, while crimes can have different impacts on different victims, there are four general ways in which victims suffer. Some victims of crime suffer physical injury or lasting disability. Some victims suffer emotional trauma and distress. Of course, here as well one must speak of the emotional trauma and the devastation suffered by those who are the families of victims, particularly the families of those who have been murdered. Other victims lose money or personal possessions. Finally, there are victims who suffer additionally, as I mentioned, due to the insensitive treatment they receive from the police or the courts, the denial of dignity which really goes to the core of their treatment.

In Canada last year there were over 400,000 break and enters. I might say that we in this House, I suspect, are not immune to that phenomenon. I myself have been a victim of a break and enter at my own home. I have suffered arriving at my home to find the house having been broken into and things scattered everywhere. Too many Canadians have suffered similarly. Unfortunately, the poorest of those Canadians do not even have insurance to cover the cost of that crime. It is very important indeed that we recognize that they must not be additionally victimized by the criminal justice system.

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Too often victims of crime suffer from a lack of assistance, support and delay in the return of their property. In this regard I welcome the provision in the legislation with respect to photographing evidence and then returning it to those who have been victimized. That is an important step forward. They often suffer from a lack of basic information about what is going on with the crime. They have been shut out from receiving information. Sometimes there is total indifference when they get to the court room. The case may have been adjourned and they do not know anything about it. They have not been informed.

In one particularly difficult case, one of my constituents, a very brave woman named Doreen Helm, whose daughter was brutally murdered, was in court during the proceedings on the jury trial. The jury had recessed to consider its verdict. She and her family were not even informed that the jury had returned and were delivering the verdict. That type of callous indifference to the concerns of victims must end. Those steps which the Government is taking in this legislation are important first steps in that regard.

In Canada today approximately one in fifty victims of violence receives any form of compensation from the Government. Only one Canadian community in one hundred has any type of practical assistance organized through the RCMP or through non-profit agencies for victims of common crimes. I