

In our motion we urged the government to do two things. One is to introduce measures right now to ensure the rights of the victim are protected and supersede the rights of the criminals. We are also asking the government to change the name of this week, November 19 to 26, from prisoners week to victims rights week.

• (1650)

Reform's position is very simple. We say the whole priority of the criminal justice system should be the protection of the lives and property of law-abiding citizens and that should come ahead of the protection of the rights of criminals.

The state exists to protect the lives and property of citizens. That is the reason we organize. That is the reason we have institutions of society, so we can live in a civilized manner and can respect each other's rights, respect each other's safety and each other's lives.

If we are to do that as a state, we have to make law breakers afraid of breaking the laws and afraid of what will happen if they violate the rights of other people. It would not be too strong to say that one of the main purposes of having an organized society and an organized government is to make law breakers afraid, to bring fear of law breaking into our society.

We have to ask ourselves does our society make law breakers afraid? I do not think there are very many Canadians who would answer that question in the affirmative. We have had many examples brought up in the House over the last several months. Law breakers commit horrendous crimes and are right back out on the street living a normal life while the victims and their families have torment, grief, upset, pain and agony. Yet criminals and law breakers have every protection, every consideration, every possible assistance and comfort extended to them.

Our whole society, our whole approach to the criminal justice system in this regard is totally on its head. That is why we have the strong concerns of Canadians continually being brought forward in this whole area.

What does the government say? What is it doing about the situation? The justice minister is saying all the right things. He is saying yes, we are going to protect victims; yes, we are changing and toughening up the justice system; yes, we want the public's confidence in the justice system.

These are all well and good, but here we have a minister who has had over two years now to do some concrete, strong, forceful, vigorous things to rectify this situation and instead is taking timid, weak, ineffectual baby steps in correcting a situation causing continual concern and grave frustration to our citizens.

The second thing we have seen the government do is get really tough with law-abiding citizens. If they do not register their firearms, they will be in big trouble, they will have a criminal

Supply

record, but nothing is being done about these weapons which can be obtained illegally and quickly by any law breaker in the country.

We have done so little to make them afraid to do that. We put the fear of God into the law-abiding citizens, who did not need it in the first place, and we have done nothing to ensure that law breakers cannot obtain an illegal weapon in the nearest bar in 30 minutes.

How will this protect our society? The whole philosophy of our criminal justice system is on help, sympathy and support for prisoners and law breakers. It says a lot that this is prisoners week. We have prisoners week but no victims week at all.

I was rather surprised when I read an article about women inmates decrying the lack of rehabilitation programs. A woman inmate was saying: "In two years I got nothing. Nobody listens and nobody cares. I am broken hearted. Inmates are upset with the lack of programs".

• (1655)

There is as real desire to help everyone we can in society to be the best citizens they can. When we have people who have broken the law and violated the rights of others who are outraged and incensed that they are not getting help and support, when the victims of crime are coming in a poor second, surely the attitude we are fostering is wrong. There must be a change very quickly.

I cite one other example that sums up what is wrong in our justice system. We have a convicted murderer who has sued corrections Canada and the Government of Canada for negligence in protecting him. This murderer was convicted for stabbing a 15-year old boy while trying to sexually assault him.

He sued because he was beaten up by other inmates in 1991. This year he was awarded an out of court settlement by the Government of Canada to compensate its lack of protection for him.

I contrast that with the family of a young woman who was murdered by a convicted murderer who in honour of his birthday, a wonderful day, was given a nice pass to go shopping and to enjoy himself. He had been convicted of murdering someone, but of course we do not want to be too harsh on anyone in our society and we would certainly not keep a convicted murderer from having a shopping trip on his birthday.

This convicted murderer went out on his birthday and gave himself an even better present than a shopping trip. He assaulted and killed a young woman. The system again failed to protect someone, this time an innocent young woman, not a convicted murderer.

The family of the young woman naturally made an appeal for compensation to the Government of Canada. Where has that appeal gone? For six years there has been absolutely no offer of compensation.