

• (1550)

This has been a long time in happening. I will give some idea of the frustration that abounds. For instance, when we debated Bill C-45 we asked for the some issues to be addressed. My colleague from Wild Rose and I put a number of motions to the House that day. One of the motions would have provided for compensation to victims of crime and for medical treatment for victims of sexual assault to be paid by the perpetrator. That was voted against and defeated by the government. We also asked that there be no provision for statutory release for violent offenders, and that was defeated.

The government might ask what violent offenders have to do with victims rights. This has a lot to do with victims rights. Dwayne Johnston is a good case in my town. In The Pas, Manitoba, he was convicted for stabbing a 17-year old lady 56 times. He was sentenced to life, with eligibility for parole in 10 years. It is six and a half years later, and guess whose community he is in. Mine.

We are asking the government to carefully consider a lot of tough legislation that has to be put in place. It should not stand in the House of Commons and say that it is working on it or that it has come 20 per cent of the way, that life is long and that it has a long time to do this. That is not what we are asking about. The government has to take the bull by the horns and deal with it.

We asked to ensure that criminals serve their full sentence if conditional release is revoked or suspended. If they are doing time, get out on parole and commit another offence, it is revoked; they do their full time. That was turned down by the government.

I do not think those are unreasonable requests. Yet time and time again in the House we hear that there cannot be an agreement between Liberals and Reformers because we are on the tough side of it and the government is on the liberal side of it.

The people who really count when we are asking for victims rights are the victims and the non-victims out in our Canadian society, the potential victims. Those are the people we must look after today.

I have had several discussions with private companies that build and operate prisons, and it is no coincidence that they are moving into Canada. They are doing that successfully. The reason is the confidence has gone in the government.

Why can the government not take another step forward, get tougher on these laws and not stop with this point of view in the legislation?

Mr. MacLellan: Madam Speaker, the hon. member says he does not want to hear about things the government is working on.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): I did not say that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I ask that responses be addressed through the Chair.

Supply

Mr. MacLellan: We have to be able to say what we are working on. It is important that as part of the answer it be perceived that the government is working toward further solutions. A lot of the areas relate to provincial jurisdiction such as maintenance orders and matters of family law.

Also, we have done things with regard to the Young Offenders Act. We have said that with respect to young offenders we are making more information available. We have said there will be access to victims and they can present statements. We have said that we will allow people to use information from criminal cases in civil cases. We have done an awful lot, and the member should recognize that.

• (1555)

Mr. Glen McKinnon (Brandon—Souris, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have found the exchange very interesting this afternoon. Like other members, I have been working with young people all my working life. I sense that this is very pertinent in terms of where we are now, where we are going and where we have been.

I had the privilege of attending the conference in Cairo in May of this year on the treatment of prisoners. This brought together 143 countries from around the globe, representing all cultures and all components of society. The feeling I came away with, and which was articulated directly by some European countries, was that they expect to have no prisons in due course. They are working toward that objective in terms of treatment of offenders. They are putting in place other strategies. They sense and we agree that there will be resulting benefits. I am sure the articulation by the justice department and my colleague will also do that.

We have some pilot projects taking place in the country right now. In Manitoba there is a victim services program, which commenced about five years ago. It offers assistance, psychological and in some cases financial. More important, it offers counselling services for people who have been victimized by various parties in society.

I do not subscribe to the lock them up and throw away the key approach, as some members do, in pursuit of increasing public safety. This is more likely to increase public risk when prisoners finish their sentences and return to the community. Evidence from the United States in those states that have instituted very simplistic and punitive based treatment such as California shows there was a rise in crime rate, not a decrease. I suggest to parties that subscribe to those views that maybe there should be a re-examination of the data as well.

My colleague from Durham put forward statistics in terms of the drop in crime rate. I think the information he provided to the House is very accurate. I too have viewed those stats.