

Supply

Christine Silverberg, the Calgary chief of police, has written: "Dangerous violent criminals should never be released". I agree. "There should be a victims bill of rights". I agree. "Victims are the most neglected group in the legal system from beginning to end". I agree. "Victims should be involved in every government decision dealing with their assailants". I also agree with that.

When will government members wake up and listen to the people of Canada, listen to what the petitioners are saying and listen to what their letters state which I know they all receive?

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to indicate to the hon. member that the constituents of Winnipeg North in addressing this issue have not only called to tell us about their concerns for safety in their homes and on the streets but they have also shared solutions.

One of the important things my constituents have told me is that we should address the fundamental causes of crime. That is just like preventive medicine. Unless we address the root causes of crime we may not totally address the issue.

I am proud to say that in my constituency of Winnipeg North the MLA for The Maples in my riding has now established the Maples Youth Justice Committee. The MLA for Inkster has established a similar organization, as has the MLA for Kildonan. I have met with all of them.

What specific initiative has the member taken in his own riding to address the root causes of crime? Does the Reform Party acknowledge that prisoners week is an international religious event that includes victims, families and communities as it addresses the issues of the victims and the prisoners? Does the Reform Party not acknowledge that the victims of the misuse of firearms, for example the relatives of the victims of the massacre in Montreal, were correct in asking for gun control? If that is so, where does the member's party stand on this issue?

Mr. Thompson: Madam Speaker, I object to any kind of a week that is named prisoners week. If this week was intended to honour victims then it certainly is not named right. The first thing I thought of when I heard we were having national prisoner's week is good old Clifford Olson, good old Karla Homolka and good old Paul Bernardo. That is exactly what crossed the mind of most people in my riding when they phoned me and said: "What in the devil is prisoner's week?" I said: "I do not have any idea at all. I just heard it was announced". They do not have brains enough to at least name it right.

● (1645)

Now they are going to defend it by saying that what they really meant was this and that and so on, but it sure did not come out that way. If you are to have something besides honouring those kinds of individuals then say so and name it properly.

Let us go to the second question. You must have not been listening, sir, when I told you about these pamphlets that are getting into—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Address your questions through the Chair, please.

Mr. Thompson: I am sorry, Madam Speaker. The hon. member must not have been paying much attention. I have been asked by the people who have brought all these materials to me to question the government as to why the health department is funding those kinds of documents that lead to nothing but trouble, that lead to crime. A root cause. It is called morals, dealing with the morals.

When you bring it to the government, it tries to defend it. If it can defend it, that would be one thing, but it cannot. It has had its opportunities to defend it and it cannot. Even backbenchers would not support some of the garbage that was going on. Of course they get punished for that. That is the rule over there: listen to the boys on the front line. They do not have enough guts to stand up on the back row and take their own stand.

I do not want to get into this great gun debate once again. We have gone through that so much. Guns are no different from any other weapon. They cause problems. The victims are victims regardless of why or how. If any member could show me that the registration of a gun will save a life at the hands of a criminal, I might support it. I do not think anyone can show me.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North, Ref.): Madam Speaker, the debate today, for Canadians who are following it, is on an opposition day motion. This is a day when an opposition party has an opportunity to set the agenda for debate in the House. Reform has introduced for debate today a motion first of all to discuss the lack of progress being made in reforming the criminal justice system. Second, we refer in our motion to another opposition day motion we had about a year and a half ago on the same topic:

That this House condemn the government for its inaction with regard to the reform of the criminal justice system, in particular its allowance of the rights of criminals to supersede those of victims.

Here we are again a year and a half later with the same concerns. As we heard from my colleague who just spoke, these are very strong, serious concerns. These are not matters we take lightly. They are matters we keep hearing from our constituents and other members of the public that they want to see dealt with. They are saying the government is not dealing with them.

A year and a half ago we urged the government in debate, which we were able to introduce, to do something. A year and a half later we are making the same request, the same appeal to government. You wonder why.