

Private Members' Business

Code is not necessarily a criminal act in a foreign jurisdiction and vice versa.

The proposed bill is one which falls under the general context of providing assistance to Canadian citizens who unfortunately experience difficulty abroad. The intent, as has been mentioned by others in this House and by myself earlier, is a good one but I believe that the bill should not proceed until there is a demonstrated need for such legislation and all appropriate consultations with the provinces have taken place.

I have not had the opportunity to study this bill in detail and the background to it, but I am not entirely sure that all of the provinces of Canada at this point in time have their own legislation in place. I know that a number of them do. I am not sure whether all of the provinces have legislation which would compensate for the victims of crime taking place within the territorial boundaries of the particular province.

Indeed, I am sure that there is a lack of consistency between the provinces within Canada. Various jurisdictions have legislation but again I am guessing because I have not had the opportunity to look at this in detail, that there is inconsistency from province to province in terms of the criteria, compensation, and so on.

Therefore, I think it is a bit premature to be thinking in terms of the federal government trying to come forward unless and until there is unanimity within the provinces of Canada, that each of the provinces has legislation and indeed that there is consistency from province to province across the nation.

Clearly, that is not the case at the present time. Until it is, it seems to me that it would be difficult and I would suggest from a constitutional point of view, rather imprudent for the federal government to attempt to involve itself with Bill C-310 at this point in time.

Mr. Phillip Edmonston (Chambly): Mr. Speaker, I think we probably have a very good understanding of where we are right now and what this bill means and what changes this bill brings forward.

We are not passing the bill today. We are moving it through second reading so that we can study it in

committee. That is it. What is wrong with the principle of this bill? Both Conservative members of this House who spoke had almost similar reasoning for not passing this legislation or not sending it to committee at this time.

Why would we object to the principle of indemnifying or compensating Canadians who are victims of crime when they are working or travelling in other countries? Why? That is what we are dealing with right here. Is the principle so offensive to your voters and your ridings?

Each and every one of you know of people who have had these problems. They have been injured, maimed, raped, attacked and have brought their problems to you and asked for compensation. It is not new. We have seen this as members of Parliament. I am sure in the past you have had to say to these people as my colleague from Victoria who proposed Bill C-310 said: "I would like to help you, but there is a gap". There is a gap between what a province would do if the injury was because of a criminal act in the province and what the federal government would do if the injury was because of a criminal act in another country. That is the gap.

What we have to concern ourselves with is the principle of this bill. Can we go back to our voters, the people who elected us and who wish us to initiate action to respond to their needs? Can we really tell them that on a question of principle, I voted against this compensation bill.

The bill is not raising taxes. It is not creating a heavy mechanism that is going to cost a great deal of money, not at all. One of the nice things about it is that it is piggy-backing on provincial programs which have been in effect for years. Also I understand that the territories have similar legislation.

We are dealing here with principle. It is most important that when we talk about principle that we look at some of the comments that were made on the Conservative side about what is good about Bill C-310.

Let us look at what the government side said is good about this bill. Those members say it is judicially plausible. That means we do not have any problem as far as the courts are concerned. Legally we can do it. Great. On all sides, members agree with the intent of this bill. Mem-