

*Government Orders*

has the effect of depriving people who want to make representations on this bill from doing so.

I am at a loss to understand that attitude. I wonder how it is that if she is a member of a party that claims to be democratic, she can deny to the people of Canada the right to make representations on this bill.

**Ms. Hunter:** Madam Speaker, I confess to some confusion, because I am trying to figure out the Liberal logic of that question. The Liberal justice critic has been quoted as saying about this so-called democratic committee that it will go nowhere after months and months of study. That is what is going to happen here. It is a disgrace.

**Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak on this motion. I am as distressed and upset as I think many of us are with regard to the emotion and, perhaps I would go so far as to say, the manipulation that has tended to surround this issue in the past 12 months.

Canada has always had better gun control legislation than its neighbour to the south. There is no question. However, as our modern society evolves and becomes increasingly more violent, it has become increasingly clear to all of us that more gun control and stiffer gun control legislation is absolutely essential if we are to maintain lawful and safe societies, particularly in our cities.

I say that I stand with some misgivings because there is no question that the events of last December 6 at the École Polytechnique in Montreal were horrific and tragic. They involved the death of 14 young women at the hands of a man who was particularly enraged at young women who broke tradition and entered professions where women were perhaps not so used to being.

The manipulation of these events is something of which none of us should be guilty. In the House on the days immediately following the tragedy there was unity, horror, sorrow, and sympathy for the victims and their families. However, there is no question that in the wake of the events at École Polytechnique came this legislation, this Bill C-80, to make gun control laws in Canada safer and more stringent.

My great difficulty, as it frequently is for those of us on this side of the House, is trying to follow the trail of bread-crumbs set down by the government as to where this bill is going to go. This bill needs to be discussed. It needs to be changed. It is a flawed bill. However, it

does—and I will make mention it further along in my remarks—have some things that are absolutely necessary, if we are to maintain an orderly and safe society in this country.

What is the government's agenda on this bill? Is this bill going to come back to this House? Is it ever going to get to a legislative committee? Is it ever going to be law? Somehow the majority of us on this side of the House think that is unlikely. What we think is that the government has decided this bill is unpalatable to a number of its own back-benchers and that the gun control laws it has introduced are too stringent. Consequently it wants a safe place for this bill to die.

With regard to the subamendment of my colleague for Saanich—Gulf Islands, I disagree with her merely on the question of process. If this special committee holds hearings publicly and really does its work, it will consider the questions, concerns and fears about this bill, of what it does or does not do, it will keep this crucially important subject before the Canadian people and put more pressure on the government.

However, I do have the definite feeling that we are going to be back to square one and that this bill, as we know it, will probably disappear from this House, never to return in its current form.

I have to add my remarks to those of members who have spoken before with regard to the Minister of Justice.

• (1310)

There are certain similarities between this bill and the bill that you and I, Madam Speaker, know far too well, which is Bill C-43, the abortion bill. As difficult as it may be within the constraints of parliamentary democracy and within the constraints of our caucus and party loyalties, sometimes we have to stand and say: this is right, this is wrong, this is what I stand for, this is what I believe in.

When it comes to the kinds of recommendations in Bill C-80 that make gun control more of a reality, more of a reality that reflects the reality on the streets of our cities, more of a reality that reflects the reality of women and children who live in fear deal with every day, that is the time for those of us who sincerely believe that these innovations must become law have to stand. Whether we are talking about a Minister of Justice or a back-bencher, wherever we sit in this House of Commons, we have to say that these are changes that must be brought into law.