

Private Members' Business

The reasons for taking the gun are also very clear. They are either to threaten or shoot with the intent of serious injury or death, or to shoot at a police officer while fleeing the scene of that crime.

Yes, a five-year minimum with no parole is a severe penalty. There is no question. But so is the penalty of being sentenced by a criminal to life in a wheelchair or the greater consequence of death as the innocent victim of a shooting by a criminal in a hold-up.

A few years ago a constituent of mine told me of the tragic killing of his father in a bank hold-up. His retired father was standing in a line when two armed men came in. They robbed the bank and while fleeing opened fire and killed his father. A loaded gun taken along for criminal purposes is a serious crime that can have serious consequences and must receive the commensurate serious penalties. We must not forget why we are here and what our responsibilities include.

The Law Reform Commission of Canada in 1989 reminded us:

The criminal law is our nation's fundamental statement of public policy. It is the instrument by which the community draws a line between the tolerable and the intolerable. Ultimately, the criminal law is a mirror of what we are; it reflects our commitment, or lack of commitment, to human dignity.

The law does not exist for the sole or primary purpose of punishing illicit acts. It exists, as an expression, in a broad sense, of the kind of people we are. It does not merely regulate our behaviour; it articulates and symbolizes our values and beliefs.

• (1820)

In conclusion, I have given statistics which are truly alarming. I have given quotations from what we heard as a committee on Bill C-80 and Bill C-17. They were unanimous in their call for tougher sentencing of criminals when there is misuse or criminal use of a firearm. I have spoken of the chiefs of police across Canada, all of whom endorse this bill. I have spoken of the membership of the police association which also endorses this bill. I have said that it does not offend the charter, and I have quoted two justices of the court to prove that.

Therefore I ask that members consider this bill very carefully. I ask that members give unanimous consent

today to allow this bill to go to the next stage, that is a legislative committee.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys):
Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak today on Bill C-24.

As the hon. member for Kitchener has stated, he was not only a member of the special committee on gun control but he was the chairman. I would say without any hesitation that he did an excellent job in that capacity, which was not the easiest at all times to handle. It was a very contentious subject. There was a wide difference of opinion, not only among the witnesses who came before the committee but among the members of the committee themselves. However I think in hindsight we created a report which was quite helpful.

By way of coincidence today, the Minister of Justice has tabled the first set of regulations under Bill C-17 which, as the hon. member from Kitchener said, was modelled largely on the report of the special committee. I want to commend him for his thoughtful presentation with respect to this bill. I know the concern the hon. member has with regard to lawlessness and increased crime in our communities. Certainly many of us, if not most of us, in this House have similar concerns.

There is an alarming increase in the rate of crime in Canada, particularly in our urban areas. This cannot be allowed to continue. It cannot be allowed to go on unchecked. We have to deal with it. We have to look at the situation in our country and state categorically whether or not we are going to do something about this, or are we going to continue to turn away from it? I do not think there is any question. The public is not going to let us turn away from it.

The member of Parliament wants all Canadians to be more cognizant of the increasing rate of crime in our country. In that regard he has presented a very thoughtful bill.

I have problems with some aspects of the bill. As the member stated in the special committee, it was recommended that the minimum for a first offence in the commission of a crime with the use of a firearm be increased from one year to three years and that for a