

• (1830)

Let me turn to the motion before the House. What we have now is a system where under the Criminal Code if a person has committed a particularly serious offence and is known to be a dangerous offender or there is some risk that the person may be a dangerous offender, we give a discretion to the attorney general of the province in which the prosecution is taking place to bring an application to have the offender declared a dangerous offender.

That discretion is given to the attorney general of each province who is an elected official, a member of the cabinet in the province. Presumably, he or she is a person who has won the trust and confidence of the people, and a lot more trust and confidence than has been earned by the hon. member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley. The hon. member's party has not been elected as a majority party anywhere and is not likely to be, so she may not have the advantage of being elected attorney general. I must say I would pity the people in the province in which she ever became an attorney general.

Nevertheless, the discretion is now given to the attorney general of the province to decide whether to bring this application. The hon. member wants to take away that discretion. She wants to put the discretion in the hands of a group of psychiatrists and if the psychiatrists say the person cannot be cured or has a particular kind of problem, bango, you lock him up and throw away the key.

The hon. member for Calgary Southeast wags her head. I am correct in what I am saying. The hon. member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley is not wagging her head. She knows I am right. She knows I have accurately described the motion she has put to the House. Frankly, it is a very sad commentary in this day and age, considering that the age of enlightenment which took place 200 or 300 years ago came upon mankind and gave us some notion of justice and fairness, that members of Parliament are now giving this idea that locking up people solves the problem.

I know the Minister of Justice will likely come out with some of these figures in his speech a little later. However, I want to point out to the hon. member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley that the United States take the policy that she advocates fairly seriously. They lock people up and they throw away the key.

The hon. member will find, if she looks at the figures and I know she does not like to do this because facts are always a problem for the Reform Party. Mr. Speaker, you know that as well as I do. There is nothing worse than a set of facts to face some of the hon. members opposite. It makes them quail and shake because facts are something they do not want to know about.

Private Members' Business

In the United States the imprisonment rate for persons convicted of criminal offences is four times what the rate is in Canada.

Ms. Meredith: Do you mean like Carpenter and Dailey and Cameron?

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast): Clifford Olson. Paul Bernardo. Think about what you are saying, Peter.

Mr. Milliken: If the hon. members opposite would stay quiet for a minute and listen to some facts, they might learn. Instead, when they are confronted with facts they yell and shout and try to pretend that they cannot hear them because it hurts them to hear facts.

Let me reiterate what I said. I said that in the United States the imprisonment rate is four times what it is in this country. Their crime rate is significantly higher and is rising. Our crime rate has gone down in the last few years, thanks in part to the magnificent efforts of the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada.

Mr. Abbott: Oh, oh. And we have got gun control now too.

Mr. Milliken: Hon. members opposite oh and ah. I know they would love to see the crime rates go up to bolster their arguments that people should be locked up. The fact is the crime rate has gone down.

We have had people locked up for longer periods, it is true. You can ask the solicitor general about the fact that our prisons are overcrowded, but I am saying to the hon. members opposite—

Mr. Hermanson: We are not talking about parking ticket violations. We are talking about violent sexual offenders.

Mr. Milliken: I wish the hon. member for Kindersley—Lloydminster would listen to what I say. If he would listen to the facts instead of yelling all the time, he might learn something. By constantly yelling he does not gain anything.

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast): It is not worth listening to.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member for Calgary Southeast is exactly the same. How can I continue with this constant yelling? Could you please call for some order, Mr. Speaker. I leave it to you.

As I am trying to say with all this yelling that is going on, the fact is the crime rate of the United States is higher than ours in spite of the lock up policy and it is rising. In other words, any reasonable person who approaches these facts would conclude that the policy of locking people up and throwing away the key, as is advocated by the hon. member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, would result in an increased crime rate and more recidivism. That is exactly the American experience.