

Government Orders

Mr. Harper (Calgary West): When did you table the bill?

Mr. Milliken: January.

The hon. member has had ample opportunity to discuss this matter. They have had opposition days when they could raise this issue if they wanted to; yet we have not seen it then.

We have offered to sit at night. The hon. member does not want to do that either. Why? Because he wants to have days and days of filibuster and hold this bill up until next year or the year after.

The government is decisive. The government made promises in the red book. The government made promises to the people of Canada when it introduced this bill. The government knows how to govern. It will show leadership to Canadians and it will proceed with this bill. It will do a great job in enacting legislation that will help reduce crime in Canada and help to solve the problems confronting this country in a way that is meaningful and sensible, instead of the ranting, pillaging and raving the Reform Party is engaging in.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to participate in the debate on the government's gun control legislation, in particular to support the Reform amendment that the bill be split into two parts, each to be voted on separately.

In doing so I wish to vehemently protest the restrictions the government has placed on this debate in order to rush the bill through Parliament. It strikes me as supremely ironic that a government that seems incapable of imposing any kind of discipline on the criminal elements in society has no hesitancy about imposing a strict discipline on its own caucus and on the debates of this House.

For more than five years Reformers have been criss-crossing this country asking the question, what do Canadians want and, in particular, what kind of country do Canadians want for themselves and for their children as we approach the 21st century. One of the most frequent answers we get to that question is that Canadians want safe streets, safe homes and safe communities.

• (1550)

This was expressed to me very eloquently several years ago at a meeting in Toronto when in response to my questions, what do Canadians want, a man in the audience got up and said the following. He said: "Do you know what I want? I want my wife to be able to leave this hotel at 10 p.m. and go to our car in the parkade a block away without running the risk of being mugged, robbed or assaulted. I want the state to discharge the most elemental of its responsibilities, namely, its responsibility to protect the life and property of its citizens. I want to live in a country where the rights and security of law-abiding citizens

and innocent victims of crime take precedence in criminal law and the Constitution over the rights and security of criminals."

There are not many MPs in this House who would disagree that increasing public safety must be a priority of this Parliament. The disagreements among us arise over what is the best way to achieve that result.

With respect to Bill C-68 and the motion to split it, the key question is this. What role does gun control have to play in making Canada a safer place? Two different answers to this question are being given in the 35th Parliament: the Reform position and the Liberal position. Canadians must decide which position maximizes public safety.

The Reform position, which has been stated eloquently by my colleagues, is that gun control will only contribute to public safety if its primary focus is on the criminal use of firearms. The diversion of police attention and financial resources into excessive regulation of the non-criminal use of firearms will not enhance public safety. Canadian voters are telling Reformers and pollsters that their number one priority for justice is strong action directed toward persons who commit violent criminal acts. Based on this position, Reform MPs have taken the lead in proposing measures to tighten up the regulation of the criminal use of firearms.

These measures include the following: implement a zero tolerance policy for criminal offences involving firearms; ensure that charges are laid in all firearms crimes and that plea bargains are not permitted; impose mandatory one-year minimum jail sentences for using any weapon in the commission of a violent crime; provide for progressively more severe penalties for repeat violent and firearms offenders; ensure that all sentences for violent crime and firearms convictions are served consecutively; provide for lifetime prohibitions from ownership of firearms for all persons convicted of violent crimes; impose the same penalty for the use of a replica firearm as for using a real gun in a violent offence; create a new offence of theft of a firearm sentence three to fourteen years; impose sentences of three to fourteen years for unlawful importation or illegal sale of a firearm for a criminal use; deem the seller of a firearm to a criminal as having aided in any future crime committed; and transfer young offenders to adult court for using firearms in the commission of an offence.

In short, the Reform Party is opposed to gun controls that are not cost effective in reducing violent crime, improving public safety and saving lives, and would repeal any gun control provisions that are not cost effective in reducing violent crime, improving public safety and saving lives.

The position that the Liberal government has taken on gun control is utterly predictable and typical of Liberals. If one comes to a hard choice between two options, in this case focusing scarce resources on regulating the criminal or non-