

Measures Against Crime

we are debating today, and its companion piece dealing with capital punishment. Never, since I have been a member, have I seen legislation introduced in such a beautiful jacket—beautifully stylized and in three colours. When we open up this beautiful jacket, we find that all the material is nicely tucked into two separate pockets in the folder. Inside these two nicely designed pockets we find two bills and three sets of explanatory notes, one entitled “Press Release”, one entitled “Highlights of the Peace and Security Legislation” and the last entitled, “Explanatory Notes”. If we read all these supporting documents to the legislation, we find in fact that they merely paraphrase each other and sometimes the paragraphs are actually identical. I can only come to the conclusion that the government is trying to impress and “snow” the media, legislators and the public.

Throughout the government's con game they keep saying that they are going to stiffen or lengthen the penalties for certain violent crimes in order to give peace and security to Canadians. This Mr. Speaker, is all so much window-dressing because, in fact, the government has in its so-called peace and security legislation weakened, rather than strengthened, the areas dealing with dangerous offenders or habitual criminals in that they have wiped out the habitual criminal and dangerous sexual offender sections in favour of their new section on dangerous offenders. They have, in fact, lessened the severity of the law for many in exchange for a very moderate strengthening of the law for a few, those few who could still have come under the severe restrictions of the law which the government is repealing.

At the same time, the government talks about life sentences as an indication of its determination to be severe with murderers, and that it is interested in protecting the peace and security of Canada. The government does not say that in its new, so-called strengthened legislation a murderer, under certain circumstances, could still get out, completely paroled, in seven years from the date of conviction.

In having to package these two bills in such a beautiful jacket with the three pieces of explanatory notes, the government is trying to dupe Canadians. All parliament needed was the bills. We did not need the expensive jacket and we did not need the three sets of explanatory notes. Surely, this is not government restraint, because the jacket alone would probably cost \$1 for each one, and I do not know how many thousands the government has given out. I guess when the government is concerned that the content is so weak, they really believe that if you put on an attractive, appealing cover you can sell the story inside. The government appears to have gone out to sell this legislation, because not only have they used the above physical means, but they have also introduced the time-worn idea of a catch-phrase, just like in an election where you use nice pamphlets and a neat slogan. The catch-phrase here is “peace and security”. Now, who in their right mind could ever disagree with that?

“Peace” is a word with a meaning so elusive that man has been chasing it like the Holy Grail, but has never found it. Everybody in Canada wants peace. I dare say everybody in the world wants peace. So, naturally, we agree with that part of the slogan. Peace! A nice idea; I

[Mr. Dick.]

would like to have it. The second word is “security”. Again, everybody in Canada would like to have security. I believe everybody in the world would like to have security. Therefore, we agree that security is nice. Put the two together, “peace and security”, and we have the best of all possible worlds. We all want peace. We all want security. Let's buy the package.

Then on the cover the government puts “Protection Against Violent Crime”. Now, nobody in their right mind is in favour of crime. Even more so, everyone abhors violent crime. This legislation is now, according to the printing on the front cover, going to give us protection against violent crime. It certainly is slick. We cannot disagree with the words used. But do these words really tell us what the legislation is all about? No. The government calls for protection against violent crime, but how do we protect against violent crime with this legislation? To protect us against violent crime we must wipe out the root causes—slums and lack of education—and we should encourage rehabilitation, reorientation. This will help protect us: the giving out of longer sentences, which only comes after the fact of a violent crime, not taking guns after the fact of a violent crime. Perhaps that phrase “protection against violent crime” is a little misleading.

Similarly, the government flogs the idea that, as a major portion of this legislation, they are advocating gun control. With the increase in violent crime, the increase in murder, the increase in the use of weapons in crime, especially guns, most people are presently in favour of gun control. I am in favour of gun control. I believe that everybody in this House is probably in favour of gun control. However, when we start to define what gun control is, we find that not everybody is in agreement.

Today we are dealing with the first bill in this sweet little package, Bill C-83. This deals with: gun control, prison breaks, wiretapping, dangerous offenders, crime inquiries, and parole and sentencing. I object to government's introducing omnibus bills in a package such as this. As a legislator, I may be anxious to support one or more portions of the six in this package and, at the same time, wish to vote against one or more portions. By introducing all of these in one package, it is impossible for the individual member of parliament to cast a vote on each of the serious proposals in this legislation. By putting them in a package or omnibus bill, the government wants an “all or nothing” situation.

In my view, the good which I might like to support might be lost with the bad. It's like the old phrase of throwing out the baby with the bath water. Or, if the bill passes, we are going to incorporate what I believe may be bad law into the statute books along with what might be good law. For this reason, Mr. Speaker, I support the motion of the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) which would be to try to sever the lengthy gun control section of some 38 pages of the 73-page bill away from the rest of the bill. I am sure most of the serious legislators in this chamber would prefer to have had shorter bills—one bill for each of the topics encompassed by this omnibus bill. If that had been done, I am sure the non-controversial sections would have been passed and would now be law; while we could give a more in-depth consideration