

I feel very frustrated in trying to communicate to the Canadian people all of the things that are contained in this 128-page bill, so I took it upon myself for the last year and a half to regularly inform them through news releases. I think I have sent 31 or 32 news releases out informing them as to the contents of this legislation.

We have also promised that if it proves to be ineffective we would repeal it. We are quite confident that it will not meet the high expectations this government has put forth in this legislation.

My question for the member is simply this. Why did she oppose my amendment to have an independent auditor review this legislation after five years to see whether it is cost-effective and whether it is meeting the goals this government claims it will meet? If they are so confident that it is going to make our society safer, why did they oppose that common sense amendment?

• (1535)

I also have another comment with regard to the comments made by the previous speaker.

I have many native people in my community and I regularly visit with them. They are strongly opposed to Bill C-68. And even with the amendments that were introduced yesterday, they are still going to be opposed to it, because they say they do not want more provisions in Canadian law that give them special status. They would like to see us move toward equality. They are not appreciative of what the government is doing by trying to tinker with C-68 to make it more palatable for native people. They are very concerned about that.

In light of the events of last night, I should review them for the people who are watching on television. Last night we sat here for hours and hours simply going over all the amendments that were made at the last minute, many of them by the government, to fix up this flawed legislation to make it a little more workable in their eyes.

Would it not make sense to postpone this, in light of the fact that it will not take full effect until the year 2003 anyway? Would it not make sense to postpone it a few more months to make sure it is workable? Because we have pointed out many flaws in it.

Would the member object to those two amendments? We feel it is really important to look at these things. I would like some good answers from the government. Maybe the member can address those two questions.

Ms. Cohen: Mr. Speaker, I think there were basically two questions asked. The first was the question of whether I would agree with my hon. friend that there should be an audit of the situation in a few years.

I think the hon. member is confused about the nature of the bill. This bill is about cultural values, crime, and a variety of issues, none of which are capable of being dealt with in a financial audit. It is not an economic bill.

Government Orders

With respect to the second question, about postponing the legislation, the people of my riding do not want the legislation postponed. They want us to get on with it and get on with our agenda.

I would suggest to my hon. friend this his constituents probably have concerns other than guns as well.

Mr. Garry Breitzkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I did not mention specifically the costs of the bill. It is a significant factor, but the member is trying to portray it as simply a cost item.

I am asking whether she would agree to an independent audit to see if it would be cost-effective, but also whether it was meeting the targeted government claims that it will reduce crime. That is the question I asked.

I also asked if she would agree to postpone it for a few more months. It does not even begin to take effect until 1996, so why rush it through now? If there are this many amendments coming at the last minute, we have a serious problem in the justice department. If they have to propose this many amendments and all the things that need to be addressed, would it not make more sense to wait and get it right the first time? I think this is something she should address.

I would like to make another comment. We have listened to all the rhetoric coming forth from the government. I would like to remind the Canadian people that we heard exactly the same rhetoric before the Young Offenders Act was introduced. So the same people who brought us the Young Offenders Act are now bringing us this gun control legislation, the same people who ran up the debt.

This bill is going to be a horrendous cost. I wonder if the hon. member would rather spend the money on crisis centres or counselling for families at risk, rather than on this legislation? Would it not make more sense? We are running further and further into debt. I do not think we need more legislation like this.

The same government that is giving criminals more rights than victims is also bringing us legislation that will put a heavy burden on law-abiding gun owners rather than criminals. I cannot see how we can accept that.

• (1540)

I would appreciate the member looking at and fairly dealing with the questions that I have. Let us wait a bit. This time line does not mean that we have to pass it today. Would it not make more sense to wait? That is the amendment we are debating before the House. Maybe she has forgotten that.

Ms. Cohen: Mr. Speaker, in response I would say that I did answer the hon. member's two questions before, but apparently he did not like the answers.

We have never sold this as a bill to reduce crime by reason of its existence in Canada, although it is being used as such on a faulty basis for argument by the opposition. This bill will provide the tools to law enforcement agencies and the cultural