

Government Orders

I say for the record that the committee hearings into Bill C-44 have been an absolute and total farce. They have wasted my time as a member of Parliament, time that could have been much better used perhaps in dealing with constituency concerns. They have wasted the time of witnesses who have travelled hundreds of miles in some cases to share their concerns with us, only to find they were shut out in the final analysis. Finally, they have wasted taxpayers' dollars on a series of consultations that the government obviously did not take seriously.

The Liberal government has not addressed the serious concerns over the legality and the enforceability of Bill C-44. In the process it has made a mockery of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. The Canadian people want meaningful legislation. They want to deal firmly with criminals who take advantage of our country's goodwill. They do not want laws that will be struck down by the courts and ridiculed by the international community. Most important, they do not want laws that cannot be enforced.

Until these specific concerns are addressed by the government, until the Liberals prove they are willing to seriously listen to the Canadian people, until they deal with the unconstitutionality of the bill, and until they give our enforcement officers the resources they need to make the bill work, I and the rest of the Reform caucus intend to oppose Bill C-44.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to follow my colleague on the parliamentary committee, the hon. member for Cariboo—Chilcotin, because I heard something in his speech that appears to be a departure from normal Reform policy.

As you are well aware, Madam Speaker, and as other members of the House who were here in the previous Parliament are aware, I have a very deep and abiding affection for the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I feel it is one of the great gifts that the legacy of the Right Hon. Pierre Trudeau left to the people of Canada.

An hon. member: You can't say his name.

Ms. Clancy: The hon. member opposite might want to check parliamentary procedure. The Right Hon. Prime Minister Trudeau is no longer a member of the House. Ergo it is permissible to name him without breaking the rules of Parliament.

It was a pleasure to hear the hon. member for Cariboo—Chilcotin cite with regard to Bill C-44 that it would not withstand a charter challenge and I forget whether he said for three seconds

or three minutes. I would like to know specifically from the hon. member what that charter challenge would be. Under which section of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms would he put it and could he possibly outline an argument?

Mr. Mayfield: Madam Speaker, I was in discussion with a constituent of another constituency, not my own. The concern there was that following the policies of the right hon. member who has been mentioned we hardly live in a country any longer. "We are a large plot of geography", he said, "in which a lot of different people try to make a living without any common history, without any common destiny or without any means of coming together".

With regard to the member's question, if she would like to review the transcript of the committee meetings the information is all there.

• (1640)

Ms. Clancy: Madam Speaker, it is fairly rare that I am accused of being obscure in my comments. As a matter of fact most people tend to think that I can perhaps be outspoken at times. I will be as succinct and as quick as possible. I already talked with my colleague next to me from the province of Saskatchewan who is a member of the bar. I found that he had the same concerns as I do with regard to the comments of the hon. member for Cariboo—Chilcotin.

I repeat. The hon. member said in his speech that the bill would not survive a charter challenge. I cannot remember whether he said three seconds or three minutes but he did say it. I know my colleague in the Chamber from London, another member of the bar of Ontario, would agree with me that there are sections of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that can come in conflict with federal legislation.

If one is to make a statement that says a bill before the House would not survive a charter challenge, as we would say in the land of my birth, Nova Scotia, "put your money where your mouth is and tell us how it will not survive a charter challenge". What section does it offend? What is his argument that states it would leave us in a constitutional quandary?

Mr. Mayfield: Madam Speaker, I will be glad to quote the sections of my speech once again for the hon. member's benefit. If the hon. member has her pencil out, she can take notes.

I quote Amnesty International that said there were measures contained in the bill that potentially violate rights guaranteed in the charter.

I also quote the Canadian Labour Congress that says:

We believe C-44 in fact violates Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.