

*Parole and Penitentiary Acts*

Mr. Speaker, the facts I have just put before you, and I could go on, are ample proof that the criticism levelled by this Opposition and the Senate is groundless.

This Bill was supposed to be above party politics. It is regrettable that the Opposition and the other House did not understand earlier that this measure is necessary for the protection and the safety of our fellow citizens. The changes proposed in this Bill are obviously necessary and they have been requested for a long time by the police, by victim assistance associations, by many private and professional and organizations and by individuals.

Indeed, the Opposition has also failed to understand that this Government does not govern with a steam roller but through consultation and by trying to reconcile divergent views. This can cause delays when you try to bring about a consensus on a controversial issue. However, I prefer such delays to the dilatory tactics used by the Opposition Members and their august colleagues during the consideration of this bill.

● (1230)

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Questions or comments. There are no questions. Debate.

**Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston):** As you know, Mr. Speaker, as the Solicitor General spokesman for the Official Opposition, I have already made lengthy submissions with regard to Bill C-67. Therefore, I do not intend to speak at length today.

It is obvious that the Conservative Government is deserving of some criticism for the fact that we are here today, for the fact that only for the twelfth time in Canadian parliamentary history a Parliament has been recalled in order to deal with a matter necessary to be considered by the House of Commons. In my respectful submission, we are here because of the reckless negligence, the reckless rhetoric of the Conservative Government, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), the Solicitor General (Mr. Kelleher) and his predecessor.

The facts speak for themselves with regard to this particular piece of legislation. As my leader pointed out, the legislation was introduced in this House over a year ago. Bill C-67 was introduced by the Conservative Government on June 27, 1985. At the time of introduction the then Solicitor General indicated that the Bill was urgent and that it should be passed as expeditiously as possible. The Official Opposition from the outset has indicated that we support in principle Bill C-67. I indicated the reasons why in my submissions of June 18 and June 26 of this year.

On September 12, 1985, the then Solicitor General indicated at page 6558 of *Hansard*, and I quote:

Bill C-67 is not the total answer to that promise but it is a very important beginning. It contains measures which were urgently required and could be introduced quickly while awaiting the outcome of broader policy reviews currently under way in my Ministry and in the Department of Justice.

On September 12, 1985, the then Solicitor General indicated the urgency of this legislation. What happened, one asks, to this legislation over the course of the last year? If in fact, as the Government has indicated over the course of the last number of months, this Bill is so urgent, why then did the Government in its wisdom decide not to bring this legislation forward for expeditious passage by the House? It was introduced on June 27, 1985. Second reading began on September 12, 1985. It continued on September 23, 1985. The committee concluded consideration on January 29, 1986 and the report was concurred in on June 17, 1986.

The Government has procrastinated with regard to this legislation over five months, since the day it was reported out of committee. Was it because there was more urgent legislation that had to be dealt with by the House of Commons? Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that this particular legislation, Bill C-67, was considered by the Government to have less importance than other legislation that was given priority. For example, the Government gave priority to Bill C-87 which involved the divestiture of Canadian Arsenals. It gave priority to Bill C-107 which was an Act to implement the United Nations Convention on the recognition and enforcement of foreign arbitral awards. The Government gave priority to Bill C-95 which dealt with the Archives. It gave priority to Bill C-118 dealing with a dollar coin. Those are the facts. The Government in its wisdom decided to give priority to those Bills rather than bringing forward Bill C-67 in order for the Bill to be dealt with as expeditiously as possible.

It is obvious that society will always be at risk by those who decide to pursue deviant behaviour. There is no way of completely eliminating the risk of deviant behaviour, the risk of criminal behaviour in society. What is hoped for is to try to minimize the amount of criminality in society in order to ensure the safety of the public. We live in the safest country anywhere in the world. There is no question about that. Our crime rate is the lowest of any western industrialized nation. We have a lot to be proud of with regard to the safety of our streets, our families and our children. That is not to suggest that we should not attempt to increase that safety and to minimize the risk of future criminal activity. One recognizes, of course, that it is a difficult task in order to ensure complete safety of our citizenry.

There are rules and regulations in society. There are those who have shown disregard and contempt for the rule of law and it is necessary in some cases to incarcerate those individuals who are convicted of criminal offences. As you know, Mr. Speaker, in Canada we have one of the highest incarceration rates of any western industrialized nation. There are more people in prison per capita in Canada than in any other western industrialized nation.

If we do have the lowest crime rate and we have the highest incarceration rate, one could argue, of course, that one of the reasons why we have such a low crime rate is that we have such a high rate of incarceration. The facts would suggest otherwise. Generally, of course, we are a law-abiding nation.