

Government Orders

deal with smuggling and illegal arms dealings and all manner of problems with guns.

This is a sensible bill. I realize there are going to be some changes made in committee. The minister has already acknowledged that he is willing to agree to certain changes to the bill in committee which will improve the bill.

The hon. member yaks about confiscation. He knows that when talking about confiscation he is only trying to stir up support for his party. He knows that at gun rallies he has been out selling Reform memberships in an effort to boost the sagging fortunes of the Reform Party. It is a shocking way to carry on.

The hon. member for Beaver River has missed some of the antics which have taken place in this House. I am sorry she did. She would have been ashamed of the conduct of most of her colleagues had she been here to watch the debate. I am glad she is back and I hope she will talk some sense to her colleagues because honestly, they need a good deal of it.

The fact is this is a good bill. It has garnered widespread support in the country. The Minister of Justice has proven time and again that he is willing to talk and be reasonable and flexible in respect of this bill. No minister has spent more time travelling the country seeking the views of Canadians than has the Minister of Justice. He has brought forward a bill—

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): He is not listening.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member says he is not listening. He is not listening to them, that is for sure, because they do not represent anybody. They represent a small minority of people.

• (1545)

The vast majority of people support what the minister is doing. If the members of the Reform Party would look at the polls that their own member conducted and look at the national polls that have been conducted on this scheme, they would agree with everything I am saying, because they know I am right.

As I said, the Minister of Justice has indicated his willingness to make changes in this legislation. He has indicated that in committee he will listen to reasoned arguments. The committee is set up and ready to deal with this matter. It is prepared to hear a large number of witnesses. Indeed, the budget for the committee for the hearing of a substantial number of witnesses has already gone forward and is being considered by the budget subcommittee of the liaison committee.

I think this bill will be dealt with fairly. The owners of guns who have not yet had an opportunity to make their views known to the minister and to the Canadian public will have that opportunity before the committee.

Mr. Taylor: Every one of them?

Mr. Milliken: There will be ample opportunity there. There will be another debate in this House on third reading.

Of course, now we have the NDP getting into the act. This is the party that for decades has supported gun control and now all their members but one have shifted gears and gone backwards. They have all decided that this bill is not really what they wanted, even though it was in their party platform. They used to say they were bound by party conventions. Now they say they are not bound by party conventions; they are not bound by the obligations laid down at party conventions that have been set on their caucus.

Only the member for Beaver River will remember this. We used to listen in this House to the pontificating from the NDP about how they were so democratic; they did everything their party dictated. Now, today, we see them abandoning party principles; they have gone out the window. I do not think the NDP knows what a party principle is any more.

It is a most shameful abnegation of its responsibility to its members, because the members of the NDP in my constituency are strongly supporting the Minister of Justice in this gun control bill. They think their members of Parliament have gone wingy. I think they may be right. Things have really gone wrong over there. Only the member for Burnaby—Kingsway seems to have kept his head straight on his shoulders.

The hon. members of the Reform Party, who are supposed to represent their constituents, should be with the NDP on this one. It is unbelievable. I cannot understand how it is that two supposedly responsible political parties in this country could take such an irresponsible attitude in respect of such a significant matter of public debate.

We have had ample opportunity for debate on this subject for the last year. It has been debated in Parliament longer than any other bill in this Parliament already. The time for decision—

Mr. Harper (Calgary West): It has only been here for two months.

Mr. Milliken: We have been here for well over a year. The hon. member for Calgary West is saying it has only been a few months. He knows perfectly well that is not true.

We have been sitting here since February 1994. That is well over a year. That is a good long time.