

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McCleave): These letters should be identified by hon. members when they are making their speeches.

Mr. Whittaker: The author of this letter is Mr. Ray Johnson of Grand Forks, British Columbia.

There is another letter from a lady in Penticton, and it reads as follows:

It was interesting to hear the result of your questionnaire, regarding capital punishment and gun control laws. I can understand your confusion...

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Whittaker: I hear a lot of noise from people on the other side, and because I receive more mail from my constituents than these few which point out in uncertain terms the faults in this legislation, they are becoming very thin skinned. They do not want to hear them. They do not want to hear this type of thing because they are so thin skinned. They cannot take it.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Whittaker: The reason I quote from these letters is that they are so well written.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I want to clarify that I read my mail in my office. I get as much mail as the hon. member does, but I do not read it in the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McCleave): That could very well be a point for debate, but I do not think it is a point of order. The hon. member was good enough to comply with a suggestion made by the Chair with regard to a point he was making in debate, and during most of the morning and afternoon all speakers have been listened to with extraordinary silence.

Mr. Whittaker: I am sorry that the whip of the official opposition is so thin skinned.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege, I am not the whip of the official opposition.

An hon. Member: You will be.

Mr. Whittaker: The hon. member will be before too long. He does not have as loud a voice as the former minister of consumer and corporate affairs. I only heard the former minister of consumer and corporate affairs. I have great difficulty hearing the voice of the government whip.

Another letter comes from a lady in Penticton, B.C., and reads as follows:

It was interesting to hear the result of your questionnaire, regarding capital punishment and gun control laws. I can understand your confusion when many pro-capital punishment are against gun control measures. As you will note, the fish and game enthusiasts are feeling threatened on this issue and react as they usually do to anything that interferes with their "rights". Perhaps, the issue has been clouded by the knowledge that the judiciary have not made full use of their prerogative to pass appropriate sentences to those convicted of violent crimes.

Measures Against Crime

On reading through the Criminal Code of Canada, it is obvious that the maximum sentences available are probably adequate. In recent years it has become increasingly apparent, to those interested enough to follow the course of a trial to its outcome, that few indeed are judges that give anything but sentences that can only be called minimal (i.e. Steven Scott, convicted of manslaughter (plea bargain) originally charged with murder of Mrs. Mae Arpe, last fall in Penticton, sentenced in January, Kamloops Supreme Court, to five years. A brutal killing, tried in camera so that certain aspects would not be made public. Scott elected for trial by the judge—one small paragraph in *Vancouver Sun* and Penticton *Herald*, in which the judge is quoted as having told Scott that his actions were despicable and he hopes he gets psychiatric help (for his perversions)—along with a sentence for 5 years—(5 years means, 40 months maximum and 18 months—if Mr. Scott plays the game in the prison)—astounding!

Perhaps the best example, or worst, is the sentence to the man in Saskatchewan, who killed four children last year—each murder conviction allowed a sentence of life imprisonment. The judge passed sentence appropriately until he said "concurrent"—if he never intended this dangerous person to be free—whatever happened to the term "consecutive"?

I realize the judiciary operates independently from government and this is right and good. As it stands they answer to absolutely no one for their action within the court. From time to time we are told that sentencing reflects the will of the people in any given age—"the mores of the times"—I don't think so at this time in the 20th century.

It is, therefore, the responsibility of government to ensure protection for the public by making certain that minimum sentences are a fact in the Criminal Code too. All the messing around with increasing maximum sentences comes to naught if the judiciary does not make use of these changes.

In these days of plea bargaining, easy bail availability, elopements from mental hospital of persons held under "order-in-council", prison escapes and hostage taking, is it any wonder that the public has begun to question the courts? It seems that sentencing for white collar crimes, involving money, draw more punitive measures than do violent crimes now.

In closing, I must add that gun control measures must come no matter what the macho types among us feel. No matter that professional criminals will always have their sources, some measures are in order that some guns will be surrendered (to be destroyed) by those who do not want their responsibility—many will keep the guns they have under a more safe manner. Guns will only be sold under more stringent conditions. This has to be a benefit to the people.

An excerpt from another letter I received from one of my constituents says:

It is my firm belief that the eventual prohibition of all firearms is the aim of this government and when that comes, we will be living in a police state. An omnibus bill is not the way to pass legislation that will affect millions of people, but it is the only way an arrogant or irresponsible government can hope to get unpopular laws passed.

I have just quoted from only three of the many letters I have received from my constituents, but I think they aptly point out what concerns the people in my riding. Many people believe that this bill is designed to confuse and divide the people of Canada, and as we know this government for its great divide and conquer ways I think they are quite right in their concerns. Yes, this bill could be just a tip of the iceberg; it could lead to eventual prohibition of firearms. People who think this way just cannot be ignored. Some of them have seen this in the countries from which they emigrated. Many are aware of the rights which have been taken away from the people over the years, and they see that this is just another one of these actions.

My involvement with guns has been of long duration—most of my life—and it has also been very complete. I doubt if there are very many members in this house who have used guns more than I have, starting back in the late