

*Measures Against Crime*

separate debate on gun control and another entirely different debate on the patchwork of amendments to the Criminal Code. This would give an opportunity to every hon. member of this House to express his views according to the dictates of his heart and his conscience.

Even the title is misleading when it states that this is an act for the better protection of Canadian society against perpetrators of violence and other crimes. The minister knows, and surely supporters of the government must know and realize that this is fiction, not really fact.

The record of the government when it comes to controlling crime is as faulty as its record in the economic field. When the Liberal government came into power in 1962 there were something like 217 reported murders. In 1963 it was up to 315. By 1971 the number of murders increased to 426. In 1972 there were 479 murders, and in 1974 there were something like 545 reported murders. In spite of this damaging and, I submit, frightening record, the newspapers of this country carry the propaganda put out by the government that violent crime is on the decrease. What hypocrisy and what nonsense!

Kidnapping, violence, rape, assault, murder and hijacking have occurred day after day until the government had to take some action, even at the expense of its credibility. This bill was the visible result, but I say to the minister that it will do nothing to help solve the causes of crime any more than the Anti-Inflation Board is helping to solve the problems of inflation.

Violent crimes are creating a climate of fear in our growing cities. Faced with economic problems, an expensive taxation policy and spending programs which have eroded the purchasing power of the Canadian dollar, many people, young and old, are looking with fear to the future. In some cases, not knowing where to turn and feeling like a dog chasing its tail, they turn to the great deceiver, alcohol or, worse, to the excessive use of drugs. These actions may turn them on, to use a current phrase, but it also turns them off such things as the production line, the full enjoyment of life, and the sanity line. It is while in a state of temporary instability and insanity that crimes of passion and violence are committed, and because the government created the economic pressures leading up to this state, it must share a heavy responsibility for our present high crime rate. I realize there is a need for proper laws and for proper law enforcement, but crime breeds in our overcrowded cities, in our urban slums and wherever there are injustice and excessive poverty.

● (1540)

The government has made a mockery of its own claims to establish a just society. It has built up a burden of debt with its mishandling of the Canadian economy which has made it difficult, if not impossible, for young and old alike to enjoy a reasonable, normal, happy way of life.

In order to make a major assault on crime, it is necessary to attack the despair and the denial of human opportunity on which crime breeds. We must deal with the underlying causes of crime—poverty, drug abuse, alcoholism, lack of opportunities, unemployment, to name a few of the factors which lead to a higher crime rate.

We live in a land of bountiful resources; we have more wheat than we can eat and more fish than we can catch. In

[Mr. Crouse.]

order to tap those resources and provide new opportunities for our people we must rearrange present government programs and spending priorities. We must give hope where now there is only despair. We must make sure that the law is respected, and this cannot be done by creating injustice for the poor while protecting the rich and privileged.

The law will be obeyed only when it is respected, but I fear that Bill C-83 as it is presently written will not be acceptable to the majority of Canadians. I say this because of the many anomalies contained in it. For example, the government has never taken the trouble in all its studies on gun control to determine the cost of administering this legislation, nor do we know the number of bureaucrats required to license all the guns in Canada or to issue permits for restricted weapons as well as the certificates required to obtain ammunition.

All this will be costly and will require yet another army of civil servants. Yet this is the government which claims it is exercising restraint on the one hand, while it establishes an open ended, high cost program on the other. We should at least be given an estimate now of the number of people the program will require, as well as its cost to the Canadian taxpayer, before we are asked to vote on this legislation. I say this as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee: the blind approval of too many pigs in a poke has led to the present financial chaos in Canada and somewhere there must be an accounting, a levelling off, a common sense approach to government or we face economic collapse.

As I said earlier, this is bad legislation. There are so many provisions in Bill C-83 which are improper or poorly drafted that it is impossible to cite all of them in one speech. For example, look at proposed Section 87(2) on page 5 and Section 106.2(5) on page 24. These provisions seem to require that every owner of a restricted weapon must have his registration altered every time he moves his home or place of business, otherwise he commits an offence and is subject to a penalty of up to five years' imprisonment. Surely this is an overly severe threat to a man who may simply forget to have his registration altered when he moves.

Clause 88(1), clause 106.1 and clause 45 of the bill when taken together provide for the licensing of owners of rifles and shotguns, establishing penalties if such persons do not obtain such a licence. This is a feature of the bill to which I must raise strong objections. It will require some two million Canadian citizens who own rifles or shotguns to apply for a licence to continue that ownership and in so doing to fill out an application form—not yet described—and to get two guarantors of as yet unstated status. It will also require that they subject themselves to the discretion of a local firearms registrar, who in turn will be subject to guidelines to be laid down by order in council at some future date. For all this the gun owner must pay a fee in an amount not yet stated.

I believe the benefits of this great bureaucratic operation will be so insignificant that they will not begin to justify the effort. Active criminals will certainly not apply for a licence and, anticipating the requirements of the regulations yet to be published, I ask: where will the line be drawn in approving or rejecting an application in the face