

*Criminal Code*

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Insanity, and so on. In other words, in 120 clauses there are only a few that have dealt with the subjects which have been the cause of most of the debate we have had.

Having paid my respects to the hon. member for Calgary North, I come back to the position the Minister of Justice took when he spoke earlier this afternoon, namely, that given the bill that was presented to parliament, parliament has done a good job on it. This is in part because parliament is a good institution most of the time, but it is also due to the fact that we have made some improvements in our rules that really first came into play, so far as legislation is concerned, in the handling of this bill. I think it has to be admitted that we had a good debate in the house on second reading. Reports from our members on the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, as well as my own observations, indicated that it did a very thorough job, and there was some surprise that it was able to do that job in less time than it had been thought would be taken.

When the bill came back to the house we had an experience at the report stage which I think the hon. member for Calgary North ought to recognize. Despite all he says about the fact that the government was unwilling to divide the bill, despite all his attempts to embarrass the Minister of Justice with statements he made on a particular occasion, the fact of the matter is that the members of the House of Commons have had the right, and have exercised that right, to express their views both in speeches and by their votes on the contentious issues.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Whatever views people may have had about changing the law with regard to homosexuality, whatever views members may have had about changing the law with regard to abortion or with regard to lotteries and other things that have been brought before us, hon. members not only had the right to put down their amendments but they were put down, we have had debate for days on end, and we have had recorded votes. Parliament has made its decision on each contentious issue standing by itself.

When we voted on abortion we were not voting on something that was in a cornflakes package; we were voting on abortion by itself. When we voted on the question of state lotteries, an instance where in my view par-

liament voted the wrong way, we were nevertheless voting on that issue by itself. I am not claiming that we lost that amendment because it was in some sort of package; neither can hon. members on the government side say in defence of their vote that it was because something else was tied up with it. They voted for the principle of allowing state lotteries so far as the Criminal Code is concerned. I would be stretching the rules a bit if I were to try to rehash those debates, particularly by referring to the votes, but I think it is appropriate to say that under the rules, parliament being the kind of pretty good institution it is, we have made our decision on all these contentious issues.

When the vote is finally taken—it is really a formality—on third reading and the passing of the bill, it will be a bill on which parliament has spoken individually on each of the contentious issues. I think this is good. I think parliament deserves credit for the job it has done. I still think it is a bit of nonsense to argue that the bill should have been divided and to say that we have been asked to take a cornflakes package.

There is one point about the votes, however, that I should like to emphasize. We had a good many of them at the report stage. They came on all the various days of the week. That is quite in order because parliament sits five days a week and Standing Order 5 says that members are supposed to be here at all times and votes can come on any day. But some of the votes on Mondays and Fridays were pretty light. As a matter of fact, the number of people who voted on Friday on certain amendments having to do with abortion represented much less than a majority of the House of Commons itself. I think the votes on Friday were of the order of 108 to 35, which is a pretty overwhelming majority of those who were present. But 108 is not a very large number of members out of a house of 264. I hope, therefore—and I address myself to the acting house leader on the government side, to other house leaders and to myself—that when the vote comes on third reading there will be enough members here so that those who vote for this bill will represent not just a majority of those present but a majority of the membership of the House of Commons. I suggest not only to the house leaders but to the whips that it is rather important, with a major piece of legislation like this, that the vote be a clear and convincing one by having on the affirmative side a number that represents a clear majori-