

*Criminal Code*

bureaucratic nightmare. He did not indicate that it was drafted in a vacuum by officials who had no concept of the issue. He did not say that the bill was such a disaster that, at least in my brief parliamentary experience, an unprecedented number of amendments had to be introduced, not by the opposition but by the government. He did not say that the preponderance of witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs were opposed to Bill C-83 and the government's conception of gun control.

The minister says that the new Bill C-51 is so watered down that he is concerned that the public may be offended about this new legislation. He feels that perhaps the bill has been so softened that the public will be alarmed that it will not have the necessary impact. I could not disagree more with the Minister of Justice.

There is one point that bothers me considerably in both Bill C-51 and Bill C-83 with regard to gun control. During the summer recess of parliament I received a couple of publications through the offices of the Solicitor General. It was patently obvious that Bill C-83 had died at the committee level. The government was certainly not anxious to reintroduce it into the House, yet during the summer recess I received a couple of booklets from the Solicitor General's office. They were very detailed, well documented, and very appealing, even though they were dealing with a bill that was dead. I had to ask myself why this unnecessary response to a dead bill? Why this unnecessary and needless cost? It does not matter whether the cost to the taxpayer is \$1 or \$1 million if it is spent in an unnecessary and needless fashion.

I placed certain questions on the order paper. The replies indicated that the two efforts from the office of the Solicitor General cost the taxpayers of Canada \$65,000, not counting the costs of mailing these booklets to Canadians who might be interested. I estimated the cost of mailing at another \$20,000.

For what reason would the office of the Solicitor General go through a needless, unnecessary exercise dealing with a bill which they knew was not going anywhere? These pamphlets or brochures were probably produced at the very time that civil servants within the minister's office were busy drafting what is now Bill C-51. I fail to see why Canadians were subjected to this additional insult to their pocketbook.

I also determined that in spite of the statements and protestations of sweet innocence made by various members on the government side, the RCMP were conducting their own inquiries in the business community. They wrote to shopkeepers and small businessmen in the business of selling guns, rifles and shotguns, asking for a lengthy and detailed report on the entire procedure. Why were they doing this? Their response was that it was for their computers. They had to have that information in order to compile the necessary statistics to implement gun control. That is very interesting in view of the fact that gun control has yet to be implemented. Again I say, at what cost? Surely the people involved within the offices of the RCMP could have been more productively occupied in other matters.

[Mr. Brisco.]

If the Minister of Justice is prepared this evening to respond to the comments of those who have spoken in the debate today on Bill C-51, I hope he will indicate whether he approached the provincial government with reference to these known criminals driving the streets of Vancouver with their rifles and shotguns on display. I hope he will indicate that he asked that their gun permits or hunting licences be revoked, because surely only under those two provisions could they legally carry these weapons.

I wish to ask another question of either the Solicitor General or the Minister of Justice. I will not deal with semantics because, quite frankly, I am not aware of whose responsibility it is. Both these have declared their concern with reference to gun control and with reference to the need, which I am pleased to see met in this bill, to tighten up and increase the sentences of those who are convicted of crimes pertaining to the mishandling of guns, and possession of weapons which are restricted without permit, with reference to crimes of violence involving guns. I must ask whether or not they have indicated to the Crown prosecutors that maximum sentences should be sought between the time in which Bill C-83 was introduced and the introduction of Bill C-51.

● (2020)

Did these two hon. gentlemen say to the Crown prosecutors, "Look, those who commit crimes of violence involving the use of guns should receive maximum sentences as currently provided, and you have our assurance that when the new bill is passed we shall escalate those maximum provisions?" Did they approach the Crown prosecutors with that point of view or that recommendation? I must say, looking at the cases in which charges have been laid in British Columbia, the end result of one charge with which I am familiar shows that the answer to that question is no. A soft sentence was provided, and the Crown prosecutor did not in any way reflect the concerns which have been addressed to the House by either the Solicitor General or the Minister of Justice.

This afternoon we had an opportunity to listen to the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Gilbert). I could not help smiling in some degree of agony at the hon. member's suggestion to establish yet another level of bureaucracy under the federal government. It was a revelation of the true nature of the ideals of the NDP—to strengthen and extend the bureaucracy regardless of the issue. It really makes no difference what the issue is—in their minds the answer can be found by letting the government handle the problem. "Big brother will look after you, the taxpayers will pay the shot." The NDP urges the government to establish yet another level of bureaucracy to look after gun control. The hon. member said this question should not be left to the provinces but that authority should be centralized here in Ottawa, requiring yet more civil servants. Gun control, we gather, is probably good for 600 or 700 or 1,000 man years. "Look at the reduction in the numbers of unemployed alone." One sees in the attitude of the hon. member for Broadview the basic philosophy of the NDP.