

*Measures Against Crime*

I waited in anxious anticipation for the introduction of this legislation with the mistaken thought that at long last the government was going to embark on a significant course toward protecting better the majority of Canada's law abiding citizens. Bill C-83 is a monumental disappointment to me. I had hoped for better.

The provisions of this bill do nothing to get at or eradicate the real causes of crime. There are no drug related provisions in the bill, for example, despite the fact that the drug trade is responsible for a higher percentage of crime in one form or another, and for criminal activity in Canada. The actual process of drug trafficking and numerous crimes of violence perpetrated by drug users in fact account for over half of the criminal activities in this country. Why is this problem not being attacked?

● (2110)

What answer does the Minister of Justice have to offer to the Canadian public for not guaranteeing their protection? He well knows that these insignificant changes in the law, such as gun control, are totally useless in face of such serious omissions as failure to deal with the drug problem.

I agree that legislation pertaining to dangerous offenders, bail reform, and rules of parole is certainly necessary, but what we have here is a series of regulations which, although not objectionable, are extremely limited in scope. If this legislation is a politically expedient attempt to appease an aroused public it may be moderately successful for as long as it takes the public to realize it has been had.

If by chance, this legislation should be truly aimed at the real maintenance of peace and security, as the government wants to call it, then I am afraid it is a dismal failure. Yet these appear to be the only changes that government is now prepared to offer. In that sense I could reluctantly support some of these provisions, not because they are worthy, but because the criminal situation is becoming so seriously acute that one must grasp at whatever straw of relief is offered, regardless of how lacking in substance it may be.

Despite its obvious shortcomings I could probably support this bill both in principle and in practice except for one glaring deficiency, that is, the complete unacceptability of the provisions relating to gun control. The control of guns is an extremely controversial and complex issue in much the same way as is the issue of capital punishment. Due to this complex nature of the gun control subject I feel that legislation in this regard should be dealt with separately, as is the legislation regarding capital punishment.

My point, Mr. Speaker, and the main thrust of my argument today is that, in order to deal with this so-called peace and security legislation effectively, the bill must be severed. I submit that the bill should not be read a second time but that the subject matter should be sent to committee in order to be severed—the gun control sections to be separated from the rest.

Were we able to deal with this matter apart from the rest, we could better debate and hopefully solve many of the difficulties inherent in the attempted legislative control of firearms. I strongly support the motion put forth by my colleague, the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams).

These provisions related to gun control have clearly been introduced in the name of short term political expediency. It is a sinister attempt to mislead the Canadian public into believing that the government is doing something about crime prevention when in fact it is doing nothing.

There has been and continues to be an outcry from the great majority of Canadians over the ever increasing trend toward murder and violence in this nation. Despite what the Minister of Justice may have to say, it is a known fact that crime is not under control in this country. There is nothing at all in this bill that attacks the root causes of crime, and too little in the way of effective punishment and restraint to give us any real hope that crime may be brought under some degree of control in the foreseeable future.

The government is now attempting to seduce the innocent populace into believing that it is moving in the area of crime prevention by its introduction of gun control. This is a sham argument. There will be no noticeable reduction of violent crime as a result of the measures proposed in Bill C-83. All that will result is another bureaucratic nightmare that serves no useful purpose other than to give the appearance of the government as a law enforcer.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has taken the position that gun control laws of the nature of those before us now can serve no worth-while purpose. Surely this association must be regarded as expert in this field. Why then has the government totally ignored its views on this matter? Who could possibly be in a better position to comment on the prevention of violent crime and the relative worth of laws affecting the control of firearms than an association of chiefs of police, men and women who all their working lives have been dealing with crime prevention and enforcement?

The problem as seen by the police chiefs is the number of violent crimes that are being committed and with which, wrongly or rightly, a firearm is being identified. There is no doubt that firearms have been involved in the commission of violent crime. It must not be forgotten that violent crime is also committed with knives, chains, hammers, axes, and lead pipes, to name but a few other instruments. There is no doubt there is an increasing concern by society about the nature, extent, and number of violent crimes. It would not be overstating the case to declare that many of society's members now have a feeling of being unsafe.

Three categories of crime that have been associated with violence and firearms have been identified by the police chiefs. One category deals with a socio-political movement associated with the manifestation of anti-establishment thinking that has accompanied the short or long drawn out process of government change. The second category deals with an element of society which will always choose to live off the avails of normal appetites, with minimum personal effort and with total disregard of its effects toward society. This is the category of crime for profit. The third category is, of course, the crime of passion, a usually violent act committed in a moment of passion or temporary insanity.

It is essential to note that in any of these categories those dedicated to the perpetration of crime will not or cannot submit to any law, and already disregard existing legislation. It is equally as fundamental to note that the gamut of violent crimes perpetrated for any of these rea-