

*Government Orders*

So much for the argument about unfairness. The Reform Party has been offered an extra opportunity to debate this bill and it has consistently turned it down. The reason is that it wants the government to use closure. The Reform Party wants the government to bring an end to the debate so that it can get off the hook with respect to its rather ridiculous opposition to the bill.

The hon. member for Medicine Hat and dozens of other members from that party in particular have gone after the bill saying that there is no evidence that the proposals which the government has put forward will do anything to stop crime. I have some evidence and I would like to quote the evidence for hon. members, particularly those in the Reform Party and some doubting Thomases elsewhere in the House.

The proposal that the Minister of Justice has so courageously put forward, in spite of consistent and persistent opposition from Reformers and other people in the country, is based in part on our promise in the red book. It is supported very amply by the Canadian Police Association, whose members, after all, are experts in law enforcement. These are the people who enforce the Criminal Code across our country, yet members of the Reform Party trumpet themselves as experts on law enforcement. Most of them do not know a fig about law enforcement. They do not know anything about the subject, yet they rant and rave in the House all day that they want evidence.

I invite them to listen to the evidence of the president of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. This gentleman, Mr. Vincent MacDonald, made certain statements after his association at its annual conference last August called for the following: stiffer penalties for firearms misuse; a ban on military assault rifles and replica firearms; registration of all firearms; controls on the sale of ammunition; and full cost recovery. Those were the five items called for by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police at its convention in August 1994. These are the principal frontline law enforcers in Canada and that is what they called for.

The hon. members in the Reform Party ignore these suggestions and all of them are found in the bill of the Minister of Justice which is before the House today. If they supported law enforcement in Canada, they would be supporting this bill. They are frauds in that connection.

The president of the association said: "We must emphasize that while it is, perhaps, controversial, we view registration of all firearms as pivotal to the entire package, critical to controlling the illegal gun trade, to supporting preventative action and to enforcing the law". There is evidence that this will work.

• (1540)

On February 24, 1995 Chief MacDonald said: "Registration of firearms will help control smuggling, gun theft and the misuse of legal firearms in a number of important ways". This is

from an expert in the law enforcement field. Surely, members of the Reform Party would bow to the ability and competence of the president of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the collective wisdom of that body all of whom support this bill and believe that this bill is the right way to go.

I want to quote another statement from Chief MacDonald. He said: "As the U.S. example has shown all too well, arming for self-protection does not work but in fact escalates violence. For this reason, we believe Canada has a historic opportunity to chart a course that is different from the U.S. This legislation not only goes a long way to address current problems, but is an investment in our future". That is what the chief said; I submit that he was right.

If that is not enough to convince members of this House that this is the right way to go, one has only to look at the polls that have been conducted on this subject. I turn to the Environics poll of October 1994. Ninety per cent of Canadians supported a law requiring all firearms to be registered. In Quebec the figure was 95 per cent; Ontario, 92 per cent; British Columbia, 88 per cent; Alberta, 83 per cent.

Members of the Reform Party are forever boasting that they represent the wishes of their constituents. That is a false assertion. These members have no more interest in the wishes of their constituents than the man in the moon has.

The Reform member for Edmonton stood in this House and admitted that his own constituents in his own poll were 69 per cent in favour of the government bill. Yet he said: "I do not care what they say, I could not care less what they say. I am voting against it because, by George, I know better". Every member of the Reform Party is spouting the same stuff and nonsense. They may not use the same words. They cloak themselves in righteousness and say: "Oh, no. We are opposing this for good reason". But they know that their constituents support this bill. They know they would support it in overwhelming numbers.

If Reform members were doing what they say they always do, supporting and representing their constituents' interests, they would stand up and vote for this bill in droves. They would all show up. They would not pull that six and seven out of a total of 50 in the House which they pulled a weekend ago. They would all be here voting for this bill. Instead, all we hear is their ranting and raving and complaining about this government action on the bill and the very sensible proposals the Minister of Justice has put forward in this case.

I recognize there are deeply held views on this bill which represent significant differences of opinion on this subject. I can only say that the government has acted in the very best interests of Canadians in bringing this bill forward. It has brought forward a bill that is supported by the vast majority of the population in every region of the country. It has brought forward a bill that has been called for by the law enforcement experts, who more than any other in Canada know what is required to