

Government Orders

Mrs. Kraft Sloan: Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues on this side spoke about different aspects, about victim impact and other aspects of the legislation. Other members on this side have spoken about many different aspects of the legislation. However, some of us have been choosing to speak to the hate crime aspect of it simply because members opposite are not getting the point. We thought we would like to do it again and again until perhaps—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Resuming debate with the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that becomes abundantly clear in this whole debate is the Liberal Party appears to be very uncomfortable with section 718.2.

We on this side know the bill is some 75 pages long. Some of the Liberal members have pointed out the bill is some 75 pages long. However, invariably every one of the Liberal speakers tonight has zeroed in on 718.2. Why is that? The reason is they are uncomfortable with it. They are finding themselves being put into a position of having to defend it over and over again and their case is getting weaker and weaker.

Now we find in this debate, which has been happening since the bill was first introduced, the speakers becoming proactive in jumping into 718.2 in order to fend off some questions from the other side. If I were not comfortable with 718.2 had I presented it as part of the government I would probably be doing the same thing.

Tens of thousands of letters, cards and names on petitions have come into Parliament, to members, by people who have taken the time to read Bill C-41. They have taken the time to get an understanding of what section 718.2 really means, what kind of precedent it can set and what it may lead to in the future when we come to defining some of the categories mentioned in it.

Let us not forget if this legislation passes, the term sexual orientation will appear for the first time in any Canadian legislation ever passed in the House. People are very concerned about that.

I understand the Liberals' current proactiveness in zeroing in on 718.2 because they want to deflect some of the questions over here.

• (2040)

They are uncomfortable with it. They know it is flawed. They know there has been a huge uprising of concern from the Canadian people, not from the special interest groups they have been talking to, but from rank and file Canadians across the country concerned about this clause in the bill as well.

They all have the letters. They have the cards. They have seen the petitions. Our Criminal Code tries to demonstrate the things we hold dear and what penalties should be dealt should these things be violated.

The government of the day and parliamentarians have an obligation to listen to the Canadian people, to a broad range of Canadian people to get the feel of the average person so when amendments are made to the Criminal Code they will best represent society's perception or views on what direction we should be going in when we deal with changes to the Criminal Code.

Bill C-41 does not reflect the views of the average Canadian because the Liberals did not pursue a broad sampling of the views of average Canadians. That is not their style. Instead they selected people to attend the committees, to submit briefs from groups and organizations, not individual views, so they could mould them into the real Liberal agenda in the bill, something politically expedient for that party.

This is one of the many bills the Liberals have introduced this session that do not address the real views of the Canadian people. I want to talk about criminal justice for a moment and tell members about a survey so there is no mistake on some of the things I may say tonight as to whether I am representing the views of my constituents. Above all, unlike the views of the leader of the Liberal Party, I am here to represent the constituents who voted and sent me here to represent them.

I did a survey on criminal justice and I wanted to get a broad range of views from right across my constituency. I asked 30,000 households about their views on the death penalty. Eighty-eight per cent of the people who returned the questionnaire said they wanted to have the death penalty returned for first degree murder. Of those 88 per cent affirming the return of the death penalty, 58 per cent suggested it should be extended to child molesters. Fifty-four per cent said it should be extended to rapists. Forty-five per cent said it should be extended to drug dealers. I think members are getting an idea of the views of the people I represent. They are my views as well.

The point is we have a Criminal Code which our courts are obligated to operate under. In the sentencing provisions judges are given sentencing latitudes. The penalties, quite frankly, with the exception of capital punishment which is not in there, thanks to the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce a few years ago, are in the criminal justice system already. It is not the problem of the penalties. It is a problem with the administration of the penalties by the judges. It is the sentencing that is the problem. The judges have latitude and they are not giving out the penalties.

• (2045)

An assault is an assault is an assault, whether it is against one person or another person, regardless of what people's differences may be. A physical assault is a vicious crime. A sexual assault is a more vicious crime. An assault that causes a lifetime injury, a disability, is a very vicious crime. There are penalties on the books to deal with these crimes. But a government like this one does not have the guts to encourage the judges to deal with them in a manner that rationalizes the sentences they should be giving. That is the