

*Measures Against Crime*

I laughed when I read of the visitation in Cuba when the Prime Minister cuddled up to Castro. Having regard to the way in which parliament is being treated and controlled, I can only say that the Prime Minister of Canada would certainly be able to give some lessons to Castro, provided that gentleman ever set up a democratic government. We go on and on. Why is there the delay? It is simply because the government does not know what it is doing and does not have the legislation ready.

That brings me to the matter of the control of parliament. Today we had evidence of the endeavour to intimidate members of parliament. When members of the opposition ask a question which implies anything to which the government objects, the Prime Minister—as he did today—rises and says, “State a charge”. The Prime Minister adds words to this effect, “Does the hon. member believe in what he has said, for unless he can establish it, his seat is in jeopardy.” In other words, if one says anything critical of this government, then that is wrongdoing and in that case the member must resign.

Mr. Speaker, that is the greatest nonsense I have ever heard. It has no basis in the Parliament of Canada or in the Parliament of Great Britain, the mother of parliaments. It is merely an endeavour to intimidate by threat. If I say anything in the nature of a threat, I would be glad to be number one to come under the bat of the Prime Minister. Going on from there, the Prime Minister says that if anyone makes a statement in the nature of a charge, he must prove it. All I have to say about that is that naturally the matter would be submitted to a committee of the House with a majority of Liberal members. I would like to know what the result would be. I do not want to predict. Even with the integrity, knowledge and wisdom of Liberal members, I doubt whether they would vote exculpation, regardless of the evidence.

Before I went into the question of this childish, transparent endeavour to intimidate, I called the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). He has sat in parliament for many, many years. He is recognized everywhere as an authority on parliamentary government and the rules. This morning I asked him whether I was correct in my assertion that this type of childish threat had no basis in our parliamentary system. Fortified by his view, I think the majority of the members of this House will now agree that this matter has been brushed aside and no longer requires to be acknowledged even by way of childish condemnation.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, did you ever see such a hodge-podge of legislation together in one bill? This is indeed an example of the degree to which the government brings together a number of subjects which are in no way joined one to the other. This legislation contains some subjects with which the opposition will agree, and others in respect of which the strongest argument can be made to the contrary. Yet we are placed in the position that unless the amendment of the hon. member for Calgary North is accepted, we must vote on a bill that contains everything from alpha to omega, all joined together without regard to similarity or any other basic reason.

I will deal with one or two of these matters in an endeavour to bring some light out of the darkness that surrounds that composition. Mr. Speaker, I hope you will

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

agree with me that this is a wonderful government when it comes to covering up and concealing the truth. It is one of the most interesting phenomena that when members of this government produce their semi-truths and get caught, they fall over, they stumble, they get up and go on as if nothing had happened. That is the position they have adopted throughout. What is this legislation? What is the reason for it?

I have come to the conclusion it is a cover-up to divert the thinking of Canadians from matters such as the mess in which we find the economy, the waste and extravagance of this government which still continues unabated. There is the falling trade, to which reference was made this afternoon, the tremendous deficit in the balance of payments, the industrial anarchy which exists in this country with a government that does not want to act and a government which internationally is suspect all over the free world. In addition, there is the crime which is multiplying. One of the reasons for the dilettante manner in which crime has been treated by this government is the fact that it has been a continual lawbreaker ever since it brought in the legislation which divided murder into two types, non-capital and capital. The Prime Minister, the Solicitor General and others are opposed to capital punishment. They have made that clear.

● (1520)

I have strong views on the subject. When I was prime minister, if a verdict of guilty was rendered and there were no extenuating circumstances or a recommendation of mercy, then, much as I hated to sign what amounted to the death sentence, we followed the law. But this government continues to break the law. Showing the utmost cynicism, the Prime Minister the other day said something like this: “I guess we will have to hang somebody because of public opinion.” Could any statement be more cynical?

How will the government implement the gun control sections? I say immediately that I am in entire agreement with the objective, reducing crime by gun. Anyone arguing to the contrary would not have much basis from which to argue. But the means whereby the objective is to be attained, as set out in the bill, indicates a wishy-washy attitude on the part of the government. This plan will not work, and cannot work. It will require a multitude of bureaucrats for registrations and considerations, almost judicial on the part of examining and licensing officers. They will need to discover if the applicant is an alcoholic, if his mind is not as it should be, and so on and so forth. Implementation will require a great deal of examination, and the government knows it.

On page 11 of the little booklet prepared by the combined intelligence of the Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General we are told: “It is estimated there are about three million gun users in Canada. Because of this large number, it is intended to phase in the licensing scheme over a three-year period.” Let us understand what that means. The government knows that it would take an army of bureaucrats to register. Mind you, they are not registering guns; the government would not do that. The bureaucrats are to register the individual. The booklet goes on to say: “Various alternatives are being considered including implementation on a region by region basis.” That is the first public recognition by this government of regional