

Government Orders

ment brings forward a piece of legislation which is so controversial and about which people care very deeply, I believe it is reasonable that the onus be put on the government to explain where the evidence is that points to registration being an effective way to curb crime.

We have asked many questions in this House on that issue. We have asked the justice minister on several occasions for the evidence. All he could do, as people would say when talking in a logic class, was make an appeal to authority, a false argument, that the police chiefs say it is a good thing to do, but there is no evidence. We have made that point over and over again. That is a very cynical move.

It is also very cynical how the whole consultation process was carried out. The minister did have some meetings with some groups over the course of the summer, which is great. However, when these meetings occur certainly there has to be some room for compromise. We cannot go in there with the attitude that we are not going to bend at all.

It got worse than that. After a while the meetings were by invitation. That is very cynical. People wanted to have a say but the minister said: "No, some people cannot come into these meetings because we want to make sure that things go our way". After that there is this omnibus legislation where the government tries to sell the good with the bad. Again, that is very cynical and very political and we absolutely disagree with that.

The final straw is time allocation right before a break. In this place, of all places, we should be talking about very important issues and MPs should be free to go back and talk about these things before they are set in stone. Unfortunately, members have been denied that opportunity because the government has invoked a form of closure.

We have spoken out time and time again on this issue. We have asked the government to produce the evidence that this will have an effect on crime. We have said that if it could produce the evidence it would have our support. However, the government cannot so we will not support it. That concludes my remarks.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to support this bill today.

This bill represents the culmination of one of the points in the red book. I want to quote from the red book in this connection: "In order to combat crime, a Liberal government will work in a broad range of areas. To strengthen gun control, a Liberal government will, among other measures, counter the illegal importation of banned and restricted firearms into Canada and prohibit anyone convicted of an indictable drug related offence,

stalking offence or any violent crime from owning or possessing a gun". That promise was included in the red book. That promise is being kept by this legislation today.

● (1535)

It is that legislation the Reform Party is trying to destroy with this phoney amendment which it put before the House today. Reform members have run across the country misleading Canadians, telling Canadians that the amendment splits the bill. That assertion is totally and completely false.

The hon. member for Beaver River has been away. However, she will have heard these false statements which are being made by her colleagues as to the effect of this amendment across the country. I know if she gets to speak later this afternoon, she will want to dissociate herself from those comments.

With respect to the bill, first I would like to deal with the allegations made by the hon. member for Medicine Hat about the use of time allocation in the debate this afternoon.

We have asked repeatedly for assistance in dealing with the bill. We have offered to sit late in the evenings in order to accommodate members who wish to participate in the debate. Those offers were declined, politely but emphatically, by the members of the Reform Party. So we need not concern ourselves about their genuine desire to debate the bill.

They are shedding crocodile tears this afternoon, alleging that they are having their debate cut off, but let me review the record. The bill was debated in the House on February 16 and February 27, March 13, March 27 and March 28 for a total debating time according to the official record of 17 hours and 46 minutes. Eighty-four persons participated in the debate before today. I am number 85.

An hon. member: That shows how much interest there is in it.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member says that shows how much interest there is in it. It shows that a filibuster has been mounted by the Reform Party.

If we look at the number of speakers, 35 Liberals, 12 Bloc members, 34 Reformers, two New Democrats and one Progressive Conservative have participated in the debate so far. In other words, the Reformers have had almost every member speak, while on the Liberal side, despite the significant differences of view on this side, only 35 have managed to participate in the debate. This is nothing but a filibuster. The Reform Party is engaging in filibuster tactics and the government is taking a very sensible approach in bringing the debate to an end. The government is putting the Reform Party out of its misery.