

Government Orders

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, I want to make a brief comment and put a question to my hon. colleague. As a member who, quite frankly, could not support the bill as it is presently drafted, I have no hesitation in putting forward a couple of reasons why.

I wish to point out a couple of fairly straightforward things. First, it is the user and not the weapon that is the cause of the damage. Second, it is the criminal element mainly that has access to weapons and will continue to have, regardless of what the law of the land is.

I am a little tired of these nonsensical references to Montreal. There is nothing in this bill, or in any other bill, that could conceivably be brought forward that could guarantee that an incident such as the one in Montreal would not occur. It is fact, Madam Speaker.

I am glad the member for Red Deer has pointed out the concerns of many citizens, especially in the regions of the country. I do not know if this is a Toronto-type bill or not, Madam Speaker, but certainly there are concerns in the country.

I hope that the reference will include some travel to regions of the country outside the major cities. I want to ask my hon. colleague from Red Deer, while I am thanking him for his outstanding contribution to this debate and for pointing out some of the concerns that I and other Canadians have, if he feels that the special committee ought to solicit the opinion of the people in the rural areas, people who own and use firearms in a very regular and lawful basis and who could be very seriously affected by some of the proposed provisions. I wonder if the hon. member would care to comment on the possibility of such a special group travelling.

Mr. Fee: Madam Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows, it is not my decision whether the committee travels or not.

I would certainly encourage this House to make sure that it did. I mentioned in my speech, and my hon. colleague just mentioned that there is a difference in perception between rural and urban areas. That goes both ways. I think the committee should get out into rural Canada. We should talk to legitimate, honest, law-abiding firearms associations in the rural areas so that the urban members who sit on the committee can understand where those people are coming from and

what their thoughts and feelings are. It is equally important to go into the urban areas so that the rural members have a chance to understand the concerns that are being expressed by those people.

It is also important that we involve the police associations. They have some very serious and legitimate concerns as well. It is important that this committee talk to as many Canadians in as many different locations as possible.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Madam Speaker, this Conservative government's actions today to virtually kill their own bill on gun control, that is Bill C-80, is just another example of their excessive weakness and lack of political will. It is also an indication of their extreme incompetency and disorganization.

The government introduced a bill in the month of June to accomplish certain legislative goals. Today it has said that it does not want to proceed with its own bill, but wants to refer the subject matter, that is gun control, to a special committee for study.

Members on the government side have said this is a good thing because we should study the subject. If we had voted on the bill and passed it at second reading, it would have been required to go to a committee where it would have received study. The government could have amended the bill at second reading so it would have gone to the justice committee or a special committee. It need not have gone after the vote on second reading to a legislative committee. That did not happen. The reason it did not happen is because the government has lost the political will to proceed with the bill. It cannot get enough support in its own caucus. It probably cannot get enough support in the cabinet. If it had proceeded with the bill, the bill would have been defeated by their own members perhaps.

People watching this debate today must be very amused. Here we have a bill presented by the Conservative government that has more support from the opposition than it does from the government members. The member from Swift Current who just asked a question admitted that he is opposed to the bill. I know many members on the government side are opposed to their own government's bill. The reason the government is not proceeding with the bill at second reading is because it does not have enough support in its own caucus. The