

Government Orders

Canadians appreciate it when they see their concerns are being responded to.

The bill we have before us today at third reading, as I indicated, should quiet the concerns expressed by many Canadians, including the hon. member for Peterborough. I think it is to the credit of this particular Minister of Justice that she has responded in a common sense, reasonable way to what Canadians have been telling us. This is an excellent piece of legislation.

I can say to the members of the House that they will be doing their constituents and certainly their country a favour by helping move this bill through the process and send it to the other place. It is good legislation and it responds I think to the common sense concerns of all Canadians.

• (1030)

Mr. George S. Rideout (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak on this bill. I agree with my colleague opposite that in some respects the legislation is welcomed and is something that we should be pleased to see before the House and, hopefully, it will soon be law.

However, I do not think the government should congratulate itself on its major accomplishment with respect to this bill because it really does not do the job and it does not really deal with all of the problems that are affecting extradition. All that it really deals with, Mr. Speaker, and I know you will be concerned about this, is the streamlining of the appeals process. There is a lot more to extradition than just the appeals process. What is left unsaid in this legislation is probably greater than what is said and that, quite frankly, is a problem and something that should be addressed very quickly.

I just have to quote from the Canadian Bar Association when it made its comments to our committee. I quote at page 2 of its brief.

The proposals were directed solely at process with no attempt to make changes to substantive provisions of the Extradition Act.

Later on, it says and I quote:

Subsequent substantive amendments may have an impact on the amendments contained in Bill C-31. The section would have preferred that the entire review take place simultaneously so as to co-ordinate amendments dealing with process and substantive changes. Amendments passed under Bill C-31 should therefore be subject to further review at the time of further substantive revisions.

What we are faced with at this time is a situation in which we have the government tinkering again. It has tinkered with the young offenders bill. It is tinkering with Bill C-36 on parole and temporary absences and it is tinkering with extradition. This is a tinkering government that does not really want to get down and deal with the hard issues that face extradition. In fact, when the minister came before our committee she indicated that there are very substantial changes that are going to be necessary under extradition law.

This aspect we are dealing with is the second stage, quite frankly. After there have been hearings and decisions made, we are then into the appeal process and that is the part we are doing first. It is the classic case of the cart before the horse. We should know what the government intends to do with extradition law before we start dealing with the appeal process.

That being said, I think we all agree that there are some benefits in what the government has done. We all have remembrances of the Ng and Kinder cases and some of the other cases that have been before the Canadian extradition process and know that, in large measure, those cases took anywhere from five to six years to be dealt with. Obviously we need some change and some improvement in the system and this bill goes to that. The process is streamlined, the appeal process will work a lot quicker. That is beneficial because there was the concern raised by a number of witnesses, some people say yes and some people say no, that Canada was going to become a safe haven, that there was the process that would take forever to be entertained, appeal after appeal.

In that sense, this cuts that to the quick and we do proceed rather rapidly with appeal, but there are still the substantive issues that have to be dealt with. I think that we should require a commitment from the government. I suggested this in committee and in fact moved an amendment which was defeated, that there be a sunset clause with respect to this particular bill with the main purpose of forcing the government to come forward with the balance of the substantive changes that are necessary. The government and members opposite saw their way in the opposite direction and said: "No. We will allow this to go and we will not put pressure on the government to come forward with the new substantive changes".