

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT ACT (NO. 1), 1976

MEASURES FOR BETTER PROTECTION OF CANADIAN SOCIETY
AGAINST CRIME

The House resumed, from Friday, April 9, consideration of the motion of Mr. Basford that Bill C-83, for the better protection of Canadian society against perpetrators of violent and other crime, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I have not been here in recent days to follow the debate, but I have read *Hansard* most carefully. There are only two or three matters with which I should like to deal, because generally speaking the entire field has been canvassed and considered in part. That leads me to mention that the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) has done a particularly effective job in connection with this matter.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: He has a fine record at the bar. Moreover, it is appropriate today for me to point out that this is his sixtieth birthday, so he has a long time to go.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: On a matter as important as the variety of questions dealt with in this bill, it surprises me that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) and the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) are not present. However, that is not too surprising because it is just further evidence of the degree with which the members of this government treat the House of Commons with a contempt which I have not known in the years I have been here.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford), I should like to indicate that the Minister of Justice has been present for most of the debates in the House, and he certainly was here much more often than the hon. member who is now speaking. Such innuendoes are highly improper because, as most members know, both these ministers have participated fully in this particular debate.

[English]

Mr. Poulin: Mr. Speaker, the right hon. gentleman indicated that the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) is not here today, but he spoke at some length in the House on this matter on Thursday. He has given this legislation great attention and has attended often in the House. Today he is attending to commitments, on behalf of the government, in Scarborough, Toronto.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Measures Against Crime

Mr. Diefenbaker: Only parliamentary secretaries could possibly give such an absurd reason as that just given under the guise of a point of order.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: This bill is either important, or it is not. The absence of the ministers would indicate that while they applied closure to force the end of the discussion, they really do not regard the opposition as capable of making suggestions which would make this legislation workable. Here we are, after 17 months of the present session of parliament, in the disgraceful situation of having this session continue since September 4, 1974. In other words, the government is trying to bring about legislation by exhaustion. Why does the government not bring in a Speech from the Throne and begin a new session?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Paproski: They are afraid.

Mr. Diefenbaker: It is not for me to ascribe lack of courage. It is simply a fact that the government does not know what to bring in, and therefore wants to delay starting a new session as long as possible.

This bill in its present form represents, to me, another step in misleading parliament as to the intentions of the government and in tightening the noose around the throat of freedom. The government brings in closure after interested parties have been denied the opportunity to present their views. The Canadian Wildlife Federation clearly set out its views in the representations it made in March. It said the following, which is particularly interesting:

● (1510)

Despite the fact that one of its main features would impose a licensing requirement on some two million Canadians, there has been no meaningful consultation with interested groups, and the over-all approach the government intended was a matter of mystery until the bill was tabled.

The CWF offered to explain its position. It offered to help in the collection of relevant information, but its offer was not even accepted. This is an organization which represents 200,000 Canadians. These people are sportsmen who believe in conservation and the preservation of our wildlife. They also believe in fairness and in justice under the law. It is of interest that this is the day of the week that was set aside, I believe in 1947, as Wildlife Week to honour, in particular, the memory of Jack Miner, that great conservationist who wrote the name of Canada all over the world by his contribution to the preservation of animal life.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Diefenbaker: Why is this session being continued? Is the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) trying to establish a record to compete with the despicable record of the long parliament in the reign of Charles I? Is it because this government hates parliament? I underline that. I have sat here under several prime ministers who, while we disagreed on the facts in respect of many matters of legislation, agreed—until the present administration—that parliament is supreme.