

Government Orders

I ran because the member of Parliament for Calgary Centre while in government never once in any of his householders asked me as a constituent what I thought about the GST, what I thought about free trade, what I thought about any of the issues being discussed. He never asked me once but he kept sending me householders, photo opportunities: Have a nice Christmas; we are doing a great job; this is what we are doing in Ottawa for you; this is how things are going to get better for you; this is why it is important to send me to Ottawa because this is all the stuff I am doing for you.

I vowed to people door to door that I would represent Calgary in Ottawa, not Ottawa to Calgary. Within this Reform Party I have been able to do that. We have a mechanism where we do toe the party line, where we do discuss all bills and motions and what our position should be. We match it against our blue book policy. We match it against our election platform, what we promised the Canadian people in order to get elected. We stay true to those two. For any bills and motions that come to our caucus that are covered under those two areas, we then vote the way we promised.

The Liberals promised gun control but they never ever promised a national registration system. They brought it in. It was not in our platform or blue book policy. Therefore, we were obligated to make a decision for ourselves and to find out what our constituents might want. We did that in various ways and forms. The position of our caucus was to be against it. It is a bad bill. It is a terrible bill. I am against it personally.

I distributed a householder in January in Calgary Centre telling constituents about the good and bad aspects of this bill and about my position. I did a poll in which 53 per cent said to vote in favour of it, but the government poll said 70 per cent of Canadians wanted it. I knew there was a difference of opinion.

I said on talk shows and working with constituents as I am sure the member who asked me the question did as well that during that time I received some more input and feedback. After we knew what the amendments would be and what the justice minister was prepared to change in this bill knowing there were some flaws I did a scientific poll. The results were balanced with 50:50 male to female, with 21 per cent gun owners in the urban heart of Calgary, Calgary Centre with high density population.

I was able to do something members in that party could not. There were quite a few who voted against the bill, nine of them, and they are going to be disciplined. That is why the finger was pointing at caucus on Wednesday by the Prime Minister. That is why the lecture was given, notwithstanding whether the quotes are right or wrong.

What is wrong is that the democratic system is not working when a party muzzles its own duly, freely elected representatives that are

paid to be here to expressly represent their constituents and they are told not to vote. They are not even allowed to get up to vote if enough members have voted already to beat what is in the House. That is shameful and unacceptable. That is what I am fighting against. That may be offensive to the hon. member and she may feel indignation at my comments but I firmly believe I am on the right side of the issue.

Mr. Fewchuk: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I believe the hon. member across the way is speaking about something that has nothing to do with electoral boundaries.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am afraid the hon. member's time has expired in any event.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be participating in this debate today on Bill C-69. Here we are talking about adding politicians to this place.

• (1125)

My colleague from Calgary Centre said it so well. If we went down the street and asked 10 voters if they would support having more politicians in this place, I am sure we would get 10 very resounding noes with comments like what planet are we living on or where have we been. Here we are and in fact we are debating exactly that which flies in the face of everything we have been hearing from the Canadian voter.

I wonder where our priorities are when we are spending time talking about legislation that is so self-serving. This legislation is all about: What are my chances of being re-elected? This is the we-me syndrome, what is in it for me. That is what this is all about: I want to protect my kingdom; how does it affect my riding; how does it affect my chances of being re-elected?

It does not have the concern about what is best for the hard-pressed taxpayers of this country. It does not take into consideration what the taxpayers of this country indeed want. It is the we-me syndrome: I have got to look after myself, never mind what the voters of Canada want.

We are ignoring the deficit and the debt which was the number one issue when we campaigned. In the Ontario election the polls indicated it is still the number one issue. Instead of that, here we are debating adding more MPs. In fact, there is a good case to be made for the fact that more is not better because the deficit and the debt have been increasing. In the last year the debt has gone up by \$100 million. Here we are debating this issue and we are looking at \$550 billion of debt. We are going into the hole \$1,036 per second and we sit here fiddling about boundary lines and adding more people which I suggest will add to this debt.

What about employment? What about creating jobs, the jobs which are so desperately needed? What about the criminal justice system, the system that is not working and a system which Canadians are demanding to be overhauled? What about our social