

Measures Against Crime

Last year the cries were more shrill, more absolute—no gun controls at all! Fortunately they are fewer this year, more reasonable and responsible, more conciliatory. Discussion is possible with more gun-owners, and when the bill is explained they are prepared to keep working with us on the new measures, or at least not to be so hostile and antagonistic. However, there are still a few extremists around, and goodness knows if they will ever change. One of my constituents announced publicly that there was no relation between guns and crime; that people should have the right to defend themselves, their families and their property with firearms and not have to rely on the police; that our government is simply trying to turn Canada into a communist totalitarian dictatorship with these attempts at law reform; that the bill is an extension of high taxation even though that higher taxation has been used mainly to help needy people; that liberty and freedom are in danger of giving way to slavery; that capital punishment is the magic answer to our problems.

I do not understand this type of raving, and I doubt if most Canadians do, even most gun enthusiasts. These paranoid pronouncements sound like a harkening back to the days of the American wild west, or at least the worst of modern American society. They stand guilty of their own accusations, a lust to exert their own form of power and intimidation over the rest of society, and I personally stand ready as a non-violent, non-weapon wielding citizen to fight them to the end.

In the name of humanity and civilization, Mr. Speaker, let us get this peace and security bill into committee where it belongs, right away, and let the Canadian people as a whole decide how they wish to put in order their own serious public affairs, hopefully with the responsible support of any minority interest involved.

● (1610)

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate. It is unfortunate that the government has seen fit drastically to limit discussion of this important measure. I am delighted to hear that the previous speaker, the hon. member for Halton (Mr. Philbrook), believes that there should be a full examination of the bill in committee, and I hope that the government will relent to a degree and allow this to take place.

My concern with the legislation at the outset has to do with the very title of the bill, which I think is some kind of unsophisticated attempt to mask the issues before us in this legislation and in the bill to follow. I do not know to whom we should give credit for manufacturing this new term "peace and security", or what particular benefit there is to the government, or to anybody else for that matter, in making use of that term. I know that the sort of law and order syndrome, which has been getting an increasing amount of credibility from a number of quarters, seems to be attracted by this kind of terminology, and perhaps it softens or diverts the actual intent of the legislation before us.

When President Nixon was in power he liked to resort to using such terms as "peace and security" and "peace and tranquility". His successor in office, President Ford, has been addicted to the same phrases. If my hon. friends in

[Mr. Philbrook.]

the Liberal party have succumbed to the same kind of psychology, then that is most unfortunate. To me this kind of catch phrase is at best meaningless jargon. I assume that by "peace and security" what the government really means is the criminal justice system, or crime and punishment, or an attempt to deal with the continuum that relates to people who commit offences against society and the system we use for dealing with such people. It is a bit of a fad these days to adopt this sort of approach to things that are somewhat unpleasant or difficult to face.

I note that those who deal with the subject of death do not refer any more to a funeral parlour but to a slumber room. Presumably there is something much more attractive about a concept that is fictitious or made up. The dearly beloved has not really died; he or she is only fast asleep! Presumably for the government there is something more attractive about talking about peace and security rather than about crime and punishment and social protection.

I am making this point, Mr. Speaker, because I believe it is symptomatic of the basic problem with this legislation. I believe that by publishing all this material and these two legislative proposals the government is engaging in a kind of legislative sleight-of-hand. It is working a kind of illusion, somewhat in the manner of the traditional magician, only the government pretends to be taking serious action to deal with situations that it has already concluded do in fact exist.

Having listened to the words of the minister who opened this debate it seems to me that there is a very large element of pandering, if you like, to a number of myths about crime, its evidence, and its control in our society. I am going to comment on that later in my remarks, but at the outset let me just say that one of the real problems with the legislation before us today is that the very theme itself that the government has adopted in this legislation is open to great question.

In his opening remarks on this bill on March 8 the minister had this to say, presumably with the full endorsement of the government. I am reading from page 11578 of *Hansard*, the second column:

—I see three paramount responsibilities which must guide me in formulating, recommending and implementing criminal justice policies. First, I must remain ever-conscious of a number of fundamental values recognized in our legal system upon which our society, as a civilized one, rests and must continue to rest. These bear repeating from time to time. They are: the dignity and worth of the human person; the right of an individual to the enjoyment of life, liberty, security and property; the full protection of the law; the rule of law and due process of law; the independence of the judiciary; the avoidance of cruel and unusual punishment; the protection of the rights of an accused or convicted person; the moral values of our society; the peace and security of the community.

It is only that final part of the sentence that is really grappled with in this legislation, and then only obliquely. We would do ourselves very grave harm if we suggested in the context of the legislative proposals that are before us that we will satisfy the framework that the minister himself set out in opening the debate on this bill.

In basic form the minister suggested there were two things that were the intent of this proposal; first was the safety and security of the law abiding; secondly, the legal rights and dignity of those charged with offences. The unfortunate part of it is, having read the legislation and