

*Government Orders*

When Bill C-72 finally did make its grand appearance into this House, Reformers were relieved. Finally the minister was dealing head on with this critical issue and stemming the use of the Daviault defence.

Reform promised to work with the minister to get this bill passed as fast as possible. Whatever it would take, we would do it. That was months ago. Now Bill C-72 is just one bill in our list of many to pass and ship off to the other place. Things could have been much different. This bill could have been made a priority, put on a fast track in the process to show Canadians that we as their representatives share their concerns over public safety and justice.

What was the holdup? Why did the Minister of Justice not give this bill the priority it deserved? Why are we only dealing with it now, the last day before the end of this session?

Perhaps a better question is what was more important than closing the Daviault defence? For one, Bill C-41 had a higher priority than ending the drunkenness defence. After all, this was a bill that was being pushed by the special interest groups and had to be passed to prove to these groups that the Liberal Party wants to get tough on crime. As well, the new gun control bill had a higher priority, since it supposedly would prevent crime and according to the justice minister save thousands of lives in the process through the creation of a new gun registry. And let us not forget the changes to the Young Offenders Act.

In other words, before dealing with the drunk defence the Minister of Justice felt he had to clear away Bill C-41, Bill C-68, and the Young Offenders Act changes. The justice minister's actions show just how out of place the Liberals' priorities really are, not only to the members of this House but to the victims of the criminals now off scot free thanks to the Daviault defence.

The Liberals are putting political causes ahead of public concerns in the hope that Canadians will be fooled by this smokescreen.

• (1845)

Bill C-41, one of the minister's priorities, is not really about getting tough on hate crime at all. The bill is filled with measures dealing with the so-called alternative sentences giving criminals an easy way out of hard time. Serious concerns raised over section 718 were brushed off as scaremongering. Concerns about true justice were put aside for the sake of criminal rights and lobby groups.

Then there is Bill C-68. Even by the minister's own admission we know the multimillion dollar gun registry this bill will create will not reduce violent crime. Law-abiding owners of legal guns will be forced to register their weapons. Thousands of firearms have been declared illegal on the minister's whim. Meanwhile gun smugglers will continue to flood the underground economy with American firearms.

Are Canadians going to be any safer under Bill C-68? Will criminals have fewer firearms? Come to think of it, will any

criminals be rushing to the nearest police station to meet the registration deadline? The answer on all counts is no.

Of course there are the changes to the Young Offenders Act which still gives young criminals kiddie sentences for adult crimes.

There is a lot of talk but no action. The Minister of Justice is not really interested in justice at all. Time after time he betrays his left wing roots by writing legislation that fails to deter crime and instead treats the criminal like a victim. The bleeding heart socialists would be proud of the minister for his charitable approach to dealing with criminals. However I am not.

Canadians are feeling less safe than ever before. Violent crime surrounds all of us. The tranquillity of our cities is shattered every night by drive-by shootings, senseless beatings, robberies and sexual assaults. Canadians are looking to their political leaders for help and the government is not delivering. The proof of this lies in Bill C-72.

When the Daviault ruling was made, Reform MPs demanded that action be taken to make extreme intoxication a criminal offence. While the minister waffled, Reform put forward not one but two private members' bills putting an end to the defence of drunkenness. Meanwhile one of the senators put forward his own bill on the issue.

With three bills now on the table the justice minister could have picked any one of them, made any necessary amendments and sped it through both Houses. Instead he took his time, wasting precious days and weeks drafting a fourth bill. In all, Canadians have waited five months for the minister to bring forward Bill C-72.

Despite the delays and the indifference on the part of the minister, Reform still promised its co-operation. We would limit debate, cut committee time, even cut the committee process altogether, all to get this bill on the law books.

The minister first put forward his response in February and Canadians have been waiting for action ever since, and waiting, and waiting, and waiting. The delays have not come from Reform. We have promised to do all we can to get this bill passed. The fault lies across the House, specifically with the justice minister. His nearly one-half year delay has put the safety of Canadians at risk while he pursues his personal agenda that have nothing to do with justice.

To close, Canadians have been poorly served by this minister. Canadians are demanding good, effective laws, not laws for special interests, not laws for lobby groups. While pursuing his own agenda this justice minister has left the drunkenness defence issue on the back burner.

Reform supports Bill C-72 and wants it passed. I am relieved this bill will finally undergo third reading and soon at least partially close the drunkenness defence. I only hope that next time the minister will put his own interests aside and work on behalf of the interests of all Canadians instead.