

We have spent six days debating those subjects and we will debate them another four days. I may be a lawyer and a politician, but I believe in action, Mr. Speaker, rather than rhetoric. I believe that the most effective action at this time is to refer this bill to the expert committee on justice and legal affairs so that the many suggestions made by members of the House, as well as those made in correspondence and in briefs, can be considered by that committee of experts. It is in the hands of the committee, not mine, Mr. Speaker; but I hope that at an early date the committee will hear, and hear exhaustively, the representations of the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Wildlife Federation—of which I am a member—the firearms and responsible ownership group, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Sporting Arms and Ammunitions Association, the Shooting Federation of Canada. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association is a responsible group that has raised questions about Bill C-83 which it is my duty, as minister, either to answer and convince them or consider changes in the bill.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I want to hear from the various native groups that have expressed concern about the bill. All of these are people who have a right to come to parliament and be heard.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Basford: An effective parliament has the obligation to provide the machinery to hear these people at the earliest time. Much has been said recently about the importance of making parliament more effective. I was delighted when the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Clark) was elected the new leader of the Conservative party, because he said one of his priorities was to see parliament become a more workable and relevant institution. I regret that his House leader and his followers are out of step with him already—only three weeks after his election as leader.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nowlan: We have not had any resignations yet.

Mr. Basford: We on this side want an effective and relevant parliament. The Leader of the Opposition wants an effective and relevant parliament, and the people of Canada want an effective and relevant parliament. For Pete's sake, Mr. Speaker, let us make this that kind of parliament!

● (1630)

It is the theory of parliament that the government proposes legislation and parliament disposes of it. In this case, Mr. Speaker, parliament cannot properly deal with this kind of legislation until it has received full, rational and complete consideration by an expert committee which, under the Standing Orders, is there to deal with bills of this House. The committee on justice and legal affairs is the place to deal with the details, the words, the clauses and the ramifications of Bill C-83 and to explore with witnesses of interested groups their views as to the effect of this legislation and where it goes.

When we have had ten days' debate on the principle of this bill, we should then refer it to the committee, as this motion would require. I do not think my history in trying

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to get legislation through this House would indicate that I am unreasonable when looking at amendments, and I think the hon. member for Calgary South will confirm that.

Mr. Woolliams: He might, but I won't.

Mr. Basford: We cannot look at amendments or changes, and we cannot look at the details and the ramifications of this measure until it is before the committee.

Someone asked how members on this side of the House can support the motion today by the government House leader, seconded by myself. The reasons are very simple, Mr. Speaker, and they are two: we on this side of the House believe this country needs an effective and relevant parliament and, second, we want to put parliament to work dealing in detail with the problems of crime in this country. Let us get on with that job.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, I was glad to hear the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) congratulate our leader, in spite of his fallacious remarks. It is true that our leader said we wanted a workable parliament, but he never suggested that we wanted parliament gagged or muzzled, and that is what the government is doing today. The Minister of Justice says he wants action and not rhetoric. I suggest that what he wants is a dictatorship rather than a democracy.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Woolliams: What has taken place, Mr. Speaker? There has never been a bill brought before this House about which there has been so much public response and uproar. It is not about what the bill is called, but rather about what it contains. All across this land—and everyone of the backbenches over there knows this—there has been a great deal of response in the form of letters and telegrams, in fact, there has never been an issue over which so much abuse has been poured on the government—and that is what it deserves. This bill contains not only gun controls—about 83 pages in that regard—but also provisions relating to dangerous offenders, amendments giving police full powers under wiretap, amendments giving provinces additional jurisdiction and provisions respecting parole and the Parole Board.

The Minister of Justice talks about wanting to get on with the job. We have so far had about 15 or 16 hours of debate. There have only been 11 Progressive Conservative, 11 Liberals, 4 members of the NDP, and 4 of the Social Credit party who have made speeches on this bill. Considering the important content of this bill and the amendments to the Criminal Code, 16 hours of debate is nothing. This whole thing is a farce. It is nonsense that the government should implement the provisions of Standing Order 75C at this time to guillotine or cut off the opposition.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Woolliams: Is this the new kind of arrogance, the new kind of duress, the new kind of coercion? Is this the new society? Is this the new compulsive democracy? Is this just the beginning? Our House Leader pointed out that