

Government Orders

it, passed it at second reading, and then sent it to committee—which has been done for years and years in this House—to either the justice committee, a special committee, or a legislative committee, and then hold hearings.

• (1650)

I agree with him. We should hold hearings. We should hold hearings with city people and with rural people. I am not in disagreement with him. We could have held the hearings by proceeding with second reading first. By proceeding with second reading first, we could have amended the bill. As he knows, if he has participated in legislative committees, you hold hearings, people suggest you amend this article, or that article, and you make amendments. You come back to the House with an amended bill. That could have been the result of the committee hearings.

By proceeding with the bill, you would have kept faith with all those people in this country who want the government to do something about gun control. The government had responded to that demand in the first place by presenting the bill. It was your government that came forward with Bill C-80. I looked at it and said that on the whole, it was a good bill. Now it is your government, having done that, that decides to proceed in a different way. I believe in consultation. It could have been done by voting on the bill at second reading and then proceeding to the hearings as we have done time and again.

I have been here for 25 years. We have done it over and over again that way. It could have been done again. We could have heard rural people and taken into account their views.

With respect to rural people, as I pointed out, we amended this twice in my time in Parliament, in 1968 with the famous Criminal Code omnibus bill, and again in 1978 when we tightened our gun laws. On each occasion people said: "You are going to destroy hunting. You are going to destroy sports shooting". We did not. We brought in amendments and tightened the law.

Can the hon. member say to me now that there is no hunting going on in rural Canada? Yes, there is hunting. They have to get firearms acquisition certificates, and most responsible hunters get them. I would say that almost 90 or 80 per cent—I do not know what the figures are—get automobile licenses because they show they can

responsibly drive automobiles. The great majority of hunters show that they are responsible and get their firearms acquisition certificates.

He says it is not right. He says that Canada and the United States are two different countries and we should not compare them. He is right. They are two different countries for such reasons as our attitude to criminal justice. In Canada we have always had an approach which believed in gun controls, whereas in the United States they did not. That is one of the major differences between us which has led to lower rates of crimes with guns in Canada and which has led to lower murder rates. Canada is a safer society—not safe enough, but away safer than the United States. In the city of Toronto, a city with nearly 3 million people, last year they had 50 murders. In Detroit, a city of the same size, they had about 400 or 500 murders. Everybody is carrying a gun in Cleveland, Detroit, Buffalo and these cities.

I agree there is a difference between Canada and the United States and part of the difference is our whole approach to criminal justice.

Mr. Ray Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Madam Speaker, I would like to raise with the hon. member by way of comment the suggestion that this government's bill on gun control simply fails to deal with one of the real issues we are concerned with in this country. It pointed out that in 1988 almost the same number of Canadians were murdered by stabbing as by shooting, 167 for one and 169 for the other. One hundred and thirty-eight people were beaten to death. I think there were 22 strangulations.

In the murder rate in 1959 of 657, 80 per cent of the people were killed by somebody they knew, and in about half the cases it was an immediate family member. Quite often it was women murdered by their husbands or their partners with whom they shared a domestic relationship.

This government has cut the funding for the status of women. It has cut the funding for transition houses. It has cut the funding for women's organizations. It has absolutely ignored the case of violence against women in Canada. We have two very important cases in the riding I represent where RCMP officers, after domestic violence where an individual has been charged, have taken the individual back home the next morning to create further violence against the people they have lived with. It is like