

Government Orders

Another important point is being responsible and accountable to key groups affected by law reform through partnerships that build on existing knowledge and expertise. Since it came into power two years ago the government has talked about the question of partnerships. We talked about partnerships between business and government. We talked about partnerships between interest groups and government. It is one reason we have seen massive consultations in all sorts of areas between the government and the people. The people of Canada appreciate that consultation because the previous government of not so blessed memory had no history of consulting with Canadians except in a very few cases.

A law commission gives an opportunity for Canadians to come forward with their concerns about developing areas and the things they would like to see. They can come forward to help develop law in areas that provide for good government. In effect it is a tool of democracy. It is one when we were in opposition we were very distressed to see removed. It is one that we promised in the red book we would reinstate. I could not be happier that we are fulfilling this promise, fingerprints of the Minister of Justice or not.

Next is the achieving of cost effectiveness in operation and the recommendations and advice it provides. This goes back to the well meant but misguided comments of my colleague on the other side who talked about the cost. The cost for Parliament to do the work of the law reform commission in time, in person hours—

Mr. Harris: Reform Party members will do it for nothing.

Ms. Clancy: They will do it for nothing. It is probably like throwing in 10 per cent of their salaries and all that stuff. I notice some of them are not talking about the pensions over there.

That is not what Parliament was elected to do. If my hon. colleagues do not understand that perhaps they need job descriptions. Parliament was elected to represent the people, to debate in the Chamber, to review legislation in legislative committees, to deal with various and sundry public policies in standing committees, et cetera, to do constituency work, and to deal with our political duties.

• (1205)

I can only say that if members of the third party feel they have the time—and I am not even going to get into the questions of expertise—to be a law reform commission, thank the powers that be we are in government and there is little or no danger of that ever taking place under the current government.

I am delighted to support the legislation. I am delighted we are fulfilling a red book promise. I am delighted there will once again be a law commission to serve the needs of Canadians.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member for Halifax who mentioned quite truthfully that there was not a vast number of lawyers in the House and that there was not a vast number of intellectuals. I agree with her. The problem is that we have a vast number of Liberals in the House. That is where the problems come from.

The hon. member spoke about the benefits of establishing the law commission. Let us go back and look at the history of the law reform commission holding hands with the Liberal government. For example, the law commission came into being in 1971. Lo and behold in 1976, and I assume at the suggestion, advice and direction of the law commission which is there to represent the will and the opinions of the people, we find section 745 of the Criminal Code was amended in the House to eliminate capital punishment in Canada, to provide for the eligibility of first degree murderers given a life sentence of 25 years to apply for early parole after 15 years. These provisions were brought forward by the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce who was a Liberal and still is a Liberal, working hand in hand with the Liberal appointed law commission.

Poll after poll has shown when polls are taken in an honest fashion of average Canadians, something that the Liberal government does not relate to, that they would support capital punishment and always have. Poll after poll has shown that Canadians are disgusted with the fact that violent murderers given life sentences can apply for early parole and in most cases get it after 15 years. Poll after poll has shown that the people of Canada do not appreciate these parts of the law.

How can the member for Halifax stand and say that the law reform commission, holding hands with the Liberal government, is reflecting the will of the Canadian people? I should like to ask her some specific questions.

These are some of the things Canadians have told us are wrong with the justice system, some of the things that would have been fixed if the law reform commission had been an effective body that listened to the will of the people.

First is the delay in implementing the use of DNA testing, which at the insistence of our party the government finally got around to. Had the law commission prior to being disbanded in 1992, and maybe it did, recommended to the government of the day that DNA testing be brought in, perhaps we would not have had to wait so long and perhaps some of the murderers who have gone free because we did not have access to this way of gathering evidence would be behind bars right now.

If the law commission was so effective, how come it took us until 1995 to deal with the drunken defence used in the courts? Why did it take us that long if the law commission was so good?