

dangerous or irresponsible, judging from their past histories.

● (2100)

We as a government cannot provide unrestricted access to a means of destruction any longer, and if this is seriously questioned then our whole policy must fail. We must pursue the philosophy of reducing the misuse of firearms. Not one hon. member of this House would suggest that an 8-year old child should be given the care and custody of a rifle since we are all aware that a child of that age does not have the background to operate a weapon safely. Using the example of a child may appear far-fetched. However, we know there are people who are mentally incapable of possessing firearms with any degree of responsibility, yet up to this date we have made no provision for those who are mentally handicapped. We also know that in each of our communities there are people who, because of their aggressive nature, are a danger to their families and neighbours if they are allowed weapons during a moment of rage. To state otherwise would be a complete abrogation of the situation as we know it.

**Mr. Epp:** "Abrogation of the situation"? What does that mean?

**Mr. Anderson:** There are people in our society who are not responsible. By the same token, hon. members of this House would in no way give an absolute right to any Canadian to operate a motor vehicle, knowing there are many people in our society who cannot handle this responsibility.

The right to possess or own a firearm is not an inviolate law of God carved in stone. Rights imply responsibility, and those who do not have sufficient responsibility should not have such rights.

I would like briefly to review the thrust of the government's legislation and comment on the different aspects of this legislation as they affect the average Canadian citizen's use and control of firearms. First, the federal government will attempt to collect guns that are not being used, and encourage Canadians to turn them in. This seems to be an eminently reasonable stance for the government to take since it is well known that many pistols, rifles, and shot-guns are passed on from one generation to another, whether there is a need for them or not. Firearms kept in many homes in this country have parts missing, or are slightly damaged and will probably never be used. But the danger still exists that either someone in the family or someone outside the family may be injured or killed by these unwanted firearms, due entirely to the proximity of these weapons during a family argument or, as so often happens with weapons which are left unattended, because children become involved with them.

I understand the government will back up this campaign with a media educational effort and I trust this will be an on-going process, not merely a campaign of one or two months' duration. I believe it is important to carry on gun education on a full time basis in order that we attain a responsible citizenry well aware of the dangers of the uncontrolled use of firearms.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### *Measures Against Crime*

**Mr. Anderson:** The government's position of eliminating certain weapons from the Canadian scene, for example, Saturday night specials, long guns which have been sawed off, and fully automatic weapons, should be supported, and it is my understanding that this legislation will prohibit their use in Canada. As well, tighter controls will be exercised over the manufacture and importation of firearms into Canada. I applaud the intention to issue permits to manufacturers, wholesalers and importers of weapons.

One of the greatest fears felt by my constituents is that the federal government will either restrict the use of long rifles to an extent that would be unacceptable to them or, second, that we in government would abolish their use totally. Registration of long guns, with all the bureaucratic red tape involved, was not seen as a solution to the restriction of firearms by my constituents. I was personally very pleased that the government did not take the bureaucratic route but that it chose the sensible route, not of registering firearms but of licensing the individual.

We are all aware that in order to drive a motor vehicle a licence is required, and this licence is obtained by achieving a certain level of competence on the road. This does not guarantee that everyone who has a driver's licence will behave in a responsible manner. However, it does guarantee that an individual has attained a certain level of competence before being allowed to operate a motor vehicle on the highway. The stand the government has taken with respect to the ownership of firearms is very similar. Basically our position is that if one is competent to own a firearm, then the number of firearms owned is not important. It is the stress on the original licence, showing competence to own a firearm in the first place, in which the government is interested. A federal firearm licence will be required by anyone who owns a firearm, whether he be a hunter, skeet-shooter, or for whatever reason he wishes to own a gun. Persons who have a history of violent behaviour or of drug or alcohol abuse, or mental instability, will not be able to obtain a licence to possess firearms or ammunition. I applaud this measure. As I stated earlier, it is my sincere belief that the weapon itself is not dangerous, but that it is the person who pulls the trigger who can be potentially dangerous.

An application for a federal licence to own firearms will require certification by two guarantors drawn from an approved class of persons—similar to the requirements for Canadian passport applications—who will be required to certify that they know of no reason why the applicant is unfit to possess a gun or ammunition. The application would then be considered by a licensing officer or a registrar of firearms and, if approved, the licence would be issued for a period of five years. The system will be administered by the province and the RCMP, and will be totally self-financed with licence fees set at a level sufficient to cover costs.

I must also commend the government on its provisions governing the revocation of licences: reasons will be provided in writing and a right of appeal to a court of law will exist. The concept of licensing the individual rather than the firearms will, I believe, be accepted by the majority of hunters and participants in gun clubs, as they realize better than anyone else that restricting the use of guns to the responsible segment of our community is not only