

the last couple of months have dealt with four bills put forward in my name in addition to their work on the penitentiary sub-committee of that committee. All the members of that committee, chaired by the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan), including the official critics, especially the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) and the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt), have worked hard. I want to thank the members of the committee, and particularly those two spokesmen, for their work on the committee and for their constructive willingness to allow parliament in the best possible way to make progress, while objecting strenuously to features of the bill and points of policy.

I want to express my thanks to all those organizations which during the course of Bill C-83 and this bill took the time to make representations to the committee. Many representations were also made to me and to other members of the House, many of whom, at great effort and sometimes at great cost to themselves, volunteered their knowledge and expertise both to me and my advisers. I include the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Canadian Wildlife Federation, Mr. Byrnat, Colonel Nicholson and other organizations who have taken an interest in this legislation.

Following upon comments in the media, while they are not generally the subject of plaudits from politicians in any quarter of this House, I should like to express my thanks to the many editorialists across the country who have taken a very deep interest in the matter of gun control and electronic surveillance, and who in that way made a contribution to this debate.

● (1510)

The sections of the bill relating to gun control deal with what I regard are the two essential purposes of the gun control legislation: to reduce the incidence of murders, accidents and suicides caused by guns, by a system of screening those purchasing guns and by a system of increasing the standard of care relating to the sale, disposition, storage and use of guns, without at the same time unduly interfering with what in this country is often the necessity of carrying a gun, for example, by the native people or the northern people who use guns as a way of life, and by people who use guns in a responsible and competent way as part of a sport or recreation. The two objectives must be to endeavour to reduce the number of incidents involving guns, without affecting the position of those in our society who require guns.

I will mention one riding only because it is one in which I have done some hunting, namely, the riding of Comox-Alberni. The hon. member representing the riding has taken a deep interest in both Bill C-83 and this bill and recognized at an early date that the measures have to meet two criteria; first, that they be effective in reducing gun incidents and, second, that they do not interfere with responsible sporting and food gathering activities. That is a riding that I know well as having within it many fine sportsmen and people who come to the area from other parts of Canada or from the United States for

purposes of hunting. The hon. member recognized those two fundamental principles of gun control and has been very helpful to me and to the government in advancing the proposals to this date.

There are a number of things that have to be done in the future. Obviously, one is that the bill must be dealt with in the other place. Secondly, as I undertook to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, we will establish the national advisory committee on firearms safety, made up of the chief provincial licensing officers, in order to provide consistency and co-ordination in the provincial application of the law, but also consisting of those interested in gun sports who have knowledge and expertise to contribute. I hope the committee will be established very quickly in order that the regulations which have to be dealt with under the legislation can be dealt with by the national advisory committee to ensure that they are sound. I would point to the provision of the bill which allows provincial attorneys general to either operate the acquisition certificate system themselves or to attach the requirements to their gun safety or hunting programs.

I hope that in future the wildlife groups and the gun clubs can be active, with the support of the government of Canada—both my department and that of the Solicitor General (Mr. Fox)—in working with the provincial attorneys general to encourage the further development of competence programs so that competence may be attached as a precondition to the issuance of a federal acquisition certificate. That is an objective which the Canadian Wildlife Federation and many others have worked for very hard. I hope that with the passage of Bill C-51 we will have provided a statutory mechanism which will encourage the program in the provinces so that we will know at some time in the future that people with guns do not have criminal records involving violence, and that they are competent in the handling of guns and have passed a course in gun safety training.

We will be organizing at some time in the future an amnesty or recall program which is designed, not to take guns away from those who still want them but to recall unwanted guns. This has been tried on an experimental basis in a few communities in this and other countries, with some success.

With regard to proclamation, it would be my hope that, subject to the bill being dealt with by the Senate—I think I should make this clear to the House—the prohibition and the new offence sections, in which the committee took a great interest, could be proclaimed shortly after passage of the legislation. However, the acquisition certificate system obviously will take some time to establish. To do it too quickly would cause problems in administration, in public information, and confusion among hunters and dealers. Therefore, it is my objective to declare the prohibition and new offence sections as quickly as possible and to work toward the implementation of the acquisition certificate program in mid-1978 after extensive consultations are held with the provinces.

I could go on and give a long description of those sections of the bill relating to electronic surveillance, and to other aspects of the bill, but I think the House has debated this bill and its