

Government Orders

• (1310)

We have asked the government on many occasions and it has not supplied to the House one substantive piece of evidence to support its claim that registration of firearms will cut down on accidents, crime or suicides. Registration will not affect this.

I have talked to many law enforcement officers across the country specifically about officers attending the scene of a domestic disturbance. They have told me to the number that any police officer who attempts to enter a residence where there is a reported domestic disturbance and who does not first and foremost assume automatically there could be a firearm in there will not be on that beat tomorrow.

The member told about this grand plan that the police officers would know in advance whether there is a firearm there. Now they automatically assume there is a firearm and have been doing that for many years. Many of police officers have told me the reason they are staying alive today is they assume and take precautions which is part of their training.

I ask the member to stand up, face the cameras and tell all of Canada including aboriginal peoples that owning a firearm is a privilege extended to them by the Liberal Government of Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I caution the hon. parliamentary secretary that he has only one minute remaining to respond. I ask members to be aware that when members are speaking for only 10 minutes there are only five minutes of questions and comments. Accordingly, if a member uses the entire five minutes there will be virtually no time to respond.

Mr. Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, in the United States one has the right to bear arms. In Canada it is peace, order and good government. This is what we are attempting to do.

We will defend the right to hunt but like anything else sometimes there are privileges and owning a gun is one of them. This is not the United States. This is Canada. We are Canadians. We have lived and abided by this philosophy. One thing the bill will certainly prove is that the rule of law will prevail.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not a right to own a firearm in the United States either. The Supreme Court of the United States stated the second amendment to the U.S. constitution giving the right to bear arms applies to state militias in their wish to defend against an arbitrary national government. That was the point of view of the amendment, not to give individuals the right to bear arms. This is a misunderstanding many Americans and certainly a great many Canadians have. However, the subject is not the United States.

Bill C-68 is at third reading now. We wanted to create a bill which will be fairer to lawful gun owners and which will offer additional protection to Canadian citizens and reduce crime.

Members opposite ask how we will reduce crime and how many lives will we save. I have to agree there is no common denominator that is going to give us that figure. Certainly with the information available from witnesses who appeared before the committee we have every reason to believe a good many lives will be saved.

• (1315)

I want to talk about what we are going to require from a firearms owner who has 10 or fewer long guns. We are going to ask that person to register his or her firearms. The registration will take place between January 1, 1998 and December 31, 2003. The cost for registering the firearms will probably be nothing to begin with or for the most part will be \$10. One will also be able to register 10 firearms for the amount of \$10. Toward the end of the five year period that figure may go from \$10 to as high as \$18 for the registration of 10 firearms.

For someone who has 10 long guns there will not be an inspection of that person's home. If there are 10 or fewer firearms there is no inspection whatsoever for safe storage. If in any case an inspector requires verification of a serial number or other information, that verification would take place outside the home or perhaps the owner could be requested to bring his or her firearm to the inspector's office.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Or they might come to the home.

Mr. MacLellan: They do not go inside the home. If it is more beneficial for the individual to have the inspector come to the home, the inspector could wait outside the door while the individual brings the firearm for verification. There is no right of that inspector to go into the home.

We are saying it will cost a maximum of \$18 but more likely \$10 for the registration of 10 firearms for life. Those firearms do not need to be registered again unless they are sold to someone else. That is the situation.

If an individual wants to gain a possession licence then that registration will take place beginning January 1, 1996 and will continue for five years until December 31, 2001. The cost of the possession licence will not be anything to begin with. There will be a fee after the system has been in operation for a while during the five year period. For those who want to renew their firearms acquisition certificate and gain a possession licence toward the end of the five year period, it could be as much as \$60. That would give the person a possession licence for five years.

There is going to be a training course for those who want to purchase a new firearm. This requirement is in place at the present time. However, if someone wants a possession licence,