

Government Orders

He knows that an offence punishable on summary conviction carries a maximum sentence of six months or a \$2,000 fine. It also carries the possibility of an absolute or conditional discharge. He knows that the innocent gun owner who fails to register will be charged under that section, not someone who is committing an offence which is the section he is referring to when he talks about 10 years. He is misleading the Canadian public. He should apologize for his deceit.

• (1645)

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that we are able to excite the opposition across the way.

What I was referring to—and I stand by my earlier statements—is that there are two classes of people when it comes to registering firearms. There are those who will be covered by section 91 who will for some reason not hear about it. I cannot imagine who they will be because everyone, before we get done, is going to know about this. I do not think the government can keep it a secret much longer. The word is getting out.

For those who inadvertently do not register their firearms, the hon. member is quite correct, under section 91 they will either be facing a jail term of up to five years or an offence punishable by summary conviction which could be as little as a fine.

However, section 92 pertains to people who willingly disobey and do not register their firearms. For this crime, the government has decided that 10 years imprisonment is a justifiable sentence. I have talked to hundreds and hundreds of gun owners throughout my riding.

In January I took a tour throughout my riding which covers the whole northeastern corner of British Columbia. I tried to talk to as many people as possible. We held meetings on this. As one of my hon. colleagues said, I did not try to drum up the anti-gun control sentiment. I merely went to these meetings and asked the individuals how they felt about it. I did not have to ask very loudly because they were very forthcoming with their sentiments about more gun control and certainly about registration, not only on restricted firearms but on long guns as well.

I asked them in confidence, without revealing names, how many of them were going to be registering their firearms. I did not find one individual in my travels who said he or she would willingly and voluntarily register his or her firearms.

Under section 92 those individuals, if they have willingly not registered their firearms, will be subject to 10 years of imprisonment. That is how I read this, but I admit that I am not a lawyer, and thank goodness I am not a lawyer.

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague give his speech and I have a couple of questions I would like to ask him.

Regarding the numbers and stats, how far did you go in trying to find this information? Were you able to get this information from the Minister of Justice or his department? Also, with you living in a rural area how long would it take for the police to respond?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): We use the word “you” so often that somehow there is sort of a dialogue going on between the two of you while the rest of us are attentively waiting to get involved. I certainly do not want to be forgotten or left out. Please, through the Speaker.

Mr. Stinson: Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not want to forget about you either.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member how long it would take the police force to respond to his home in case of an emergency if he was to dial 911 like we normally can in most cities?

• (1650)

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his questions.

As I indicated in my speech, it is simply not possible for our police to get there on time. If we talk to the policemen one on one they readily admit this.

Statistics clearly indicate, unfortunately, that the vast majority of times when police are responding to a crime, by the time they get there the crime has already taken place. Their job is to try to investigate and hopefully apprehend the criminal. That is the job and the duty of the police in most cases. On rare occasions they can intervene in time to save someone from assault, rape or murder, but it does not happen very often.

In my case, because I live outside of town, I suggest it would probably take in the neighbourhood of half an hour for the police to get there if someone was breaking into my home. We see increasing evidence across the country that citizens are concerned. There is increasing evidence of home invasions, where young hoodlums break into homes, often targeting the elderly. They break into these homes for no apparent reason. Many times the people are at home and they have no means to defend themselves.

I guess the answer to my hon. friend's question is that it would probably take about half an hour before the police could respond to a break-in in my home.

As to how much effort I have made to try to get statistics from the government, I referred in my speech to the fact that last June I asked a question during question period of the minister requesting the statistical evidence to prove how even the existing gun controls under Bill C-17, without registration, were working to prevent crime, to bring down the levels of violent crime and the criminal misuse of firearms. Nothing was forthcoming.