

Explosives Act

because we thought that too dangerous. Nevertheless, we often took three, four or five blasting caps from the powder magazine. The magazine was unlocked. There was no lock on the door so far as I can remember, and the kids used to wander all over the place. We would walk to the rock dump, throw these blasting caps down and hear them exploding.

Mr. Francis: I hope the hon. member does not approve of this now?

Mr. Howard (Skeena): I have improved a little bit. I no longer use that type of explosive approach.

Mr. Francis: I said approve, not improve.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): I am trying to say that we showed a respectful attitude to explosives. I do not know anyone in Kimberley who was injured by blasting caps. When you grow up with explosives, you soon learn what you can and cannot do, that explosives are dangerous if improperly used, and that certain precautions must be observed. On the other hand, when you grow up in a community in which miners bring home bits of dynamite in lunch buckets, you learn to understand explosives. One learns to adopt a certain attitude to explosives, and this attitude is not learned in other places.

The attitude to explosives of those Canadians who live in metropolitan and urban areas is different from the attitude of those who live in rural areas. People living in rural areas, in farming communities, will tell you of farmers using explosives for all manner of purposes on the farm. They will tell you of farmers combining a certain type of fertilizer with diesel fuels and a detonator—I do not know what they use as a detonator; I think four of five sticks of dynamite would serve—and blasting holes in the ground for holding water. That is pretty common. You never hear of that in the city, but that is pretty common in rural areas. Also, people in the rural areas like to make their own cartridges. They make them in basements, sheds or garages. They weigh the powder carefully, pack it into cartridges and make their own shells. Under this bill, such people will be deemed to be operating a factory and will need to be licensed and controlled by the minister or whoever will make and enforce these particular regulations.

It seems to me that it is unwise to foist the concepts of city dwellers regarding explosives on country folk. Different considerations are involved as between rural and urban areas. I doubt whether those who drew the bill or any members of cabinet know anything about making homemade cartridges. The people who make their own cartridges make them for their own use. They go out hunting. They make them instead of buying cartridges by mail order from the Timothy Eaton Company, Simpsons-Sears or the hardware store in town. If the bill in its present form is passed, all that will change. All these freedoms of people in the rural areas will be impinged upon and taken away. They will be forced to obtain licenses if they want to own a gun for hunting. They need a hunting license, of course, and they will need a license with which to buy shells for the gun. Of course, the person selling the shells will also need a license. Therefore, these

[Mr. Howard (Skeena)]

restrictions and confinements just do not make sense, especially to people in rural areas.

Whether these arguments will be acceptable to the minister and the department I do not know. I hope they are. I hope, when we consider the bill in committee, some of these ideas will be considered. If there are to be restrictions on explosives, let them be justifiable restrictions, yes. But for heaven sake do not expand them and make rules and regulations applying to the relatively innocent purchase of ordinary cartridges and rifles used for hunting or for self protection. I think it is unwise to restrict greatly by legislation people who simply want to live their lives as best they can and go about their innocent business without intending to hurt anybody.

Criminals, or people with criminal intent, Mr. Speaker, will find ways of circumventing the rules, no matter how strict they are. People with criminal intent will find a way to obtain explosives, just as they have in the past. They will obtain cartridges, just as they have in the past. They will obtain small arms, machine guns and all the other weaponry necessary for the carrying out of their criminal acts, just as they are now doing and as they have done in the past. Regardless of the severity of restrictions, they will still go about their way. Those of a dissenting point of view will still find ways, if they desire, of expressing their dissent or disagreement, either with explosives or any other substances, no matter how strict the rules are.

We must all be deeply concerned about the fractures in our society. There must be deep understanding and feeling, and a desire to correct matters, so that violence does not appeal to those who want to correct present circumstances that they cannot support. We ought to try to change our social ethics and establish some other form of value system in our society. We must establish different mechanisms or meaningful channels for enabling people to express their frustrations, so that someone in authority can listen to those frustrations and take corrective action. The more we oppress, the more the state seeks to legislate, control, confine, restrict and deny freedoms, the more people who are dissatisfied will find a way to rupture the existing order and break out. I am very much afraid this could easily be the case if this legislation becomes law in its present form. This is the feature the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) mentioned.

• (1720)

The drafting of regulations, the administration and enforcement of those regulations, which are in fact law, is done by people within the public service structure. Many of them really do not know what life is all about. Many of them do not know what it is like to live in a rural area. By starting with the ivory tower approach, and by applying the full powers of this law to the possession of a box of .22 shells, we will create more trouble for society than we can conceive at this time. I am not sure that that is the intention of the legislation or the minister. My remarks may have been critical. In a sense, they were designed to get across a point of view that I hope will be accepted by the minister. When we proceed further with the bill, these views should be reflected in the law so that it will be beneficial to the whole of society, not damaging.