

Government Orders

basis that will enable us to have less crime in the future. There is a substantial difference.

Also, with respect to the issue of delay, the hon. member should give his head a shake and realize that the people of Canada want us to get on with the business of governing. The people of Canada are not obsessed by guns. The people of Canada are worried about jobs and unemployment. Equating money for gun control with money for crisis centres is unfair, particularly coming from a party whose members tried to turn down summer grants for those very services in their ridings.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate, at third reading, of Bill C-68, the gun control legislation. My short experience as a parliamentarian has made me more familiar with the whole enactment process, and also more aware of the importance of lobbies.

There is a lobby in favour of gun control and one opposed to it but, in my opinion, the only lobby that really matters is my constituents. Consequently, my position on this issue, which is also that of the Bloc Québécois, reflects the discussions which I had with my constituents. I am thinking in particular of the residents of Saint-Médard, in the Rivière-du-Loup area, the community health department official who came to my office to discuss the impact of that legislation, and also those representing shooting clubs and firearms merchants. This is not a black and white issue.

In this case, I believe that the approach is very different from the one used with the social program reform, when the government tried to impose a UI reform on the backs of the unemployed and seasonal workers. In that case we had no choice but to oppose such measure.

This is the first time in 18 months that I have had to really weigh the government's intentions and the real impact of its legislation, including in rural areas, which have the highest rate of accidents related to the use of firearms, even though the use of such firearms, including by hunters, is generally much more in compliance with the legislation.

In terms of its purpose, this bill seeks to reduce the number of deaths and injuries related to firearms, as well as to ensure legitimate, controlled and prudent ownership of such weapons, even though it will not prevent certain uncontrollable, impulsive reactions leading to tragedies. The objective is no doubt very laudable. However, is universal registration the solution? Given the increasing number of acts of violence in today's society, it seems that we have to use a curative approach and see if we get good results.

My philosophy regarding this bill is the same as the one which prevails in the occupational safety and health sector.

• (1545)

The basic principle we must consider is that in order to prevent crimes or accidents involving firearms, an effort must be made to eliminate the problem at the source, as with any accident at work.

Take noise, for example. In certain cases, we can completely eliminate the noise made by a firearm with a silencer or another similar device, and, when that is not possible, people can wear earplugs to protect their hearing. Using this model, the question in the case of firearms is how to cut down on the number of deaths.

The first approach that I think is important and that is not the focus of this bill, but should be taken into consideration, is to eliminate problems at the source. We must have information about the kinds of accidents that are associated with the use of firearms, how criminals go about smuggling firearms, how, in cases of domestic violence, one of the spouses uses a gun with results that are irreparable and final, how many hunting and other accidents take place. This is how we can reduce the number of mortalities from the outset, by eliminating the problem at the source.

This is an area in which Western society has not been too successful. We have an increase in violence, a very high rate of unemployment, a growing need for the services of psychologists and too much violence on television. These are all significant factors that require a systemic approach.

With particular respect to firearms, we have a situation where we cannot solve the problem at the source, but we must try to reduce the negative effects of firearm use. We can say that the purpose of the bill should be to ensure that firearms are not available to someone wishing to take an irreparable step.

In order to achieve this goal, and that is the purpose of registration, we must know who possesses firearms. Are they legally entitled to do so? We must ensure that people with firearms are honest people, in so far as possible, and that they are capable of using those firearms correctly. Will the method proposed, registration, be effective? We shall see.

Plenty of time has been allowed for implementation. There will be no change for three years. After that, there will be a five year period, taking us to the year 2003, during which registration can be carried out. That is when we will see whether values have changed in our society, because that is really what this bill is proposing, a change in values. Because our society views violence differently, a long established practice needs to be changed to ensure adequate control over firearms.