

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Nunez: Mr. Speaker, of course there are limits to what we can do. There are mentally disturbed individuals in every society. However, I believe that our goal and the public's goal is to minimize the risk of crimes being committed with firearms.

I do not know whether the weapon used by Marc Lépine was registered, but I think firearms registration will be helpful because we will know who the owner is. In the case of people who are mentally disturbed, I trust they will be denied the right to have a firearms licence.

I think registration is essential to gun control. Of course, if we have a national registration system, we can also ensure safer storage of these firearms. I hope that this bill will help us achieve some of these goals, despite, I repeat, some considerable deficiencies in Bill C-68.

• (1550)

[English]

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I remember one time being stopped by a policeman for a routine check in my car and in the back seat was a baseball bat. He asked why I had a baseball bat in my car. I said that along with the ball and the glove on the floor of the car, I used it to play with my children. This was a few years ago. He said that was fine, but that if I were carrying it to use as protection or to use against someone it would be a crime to have it in the car.

It seems to me that the intention of the use of a firearm or a hatpin or a hammer or a kitchen knife or a pair of fists is the thrust of what we should be talking about. It is the intention of a person to harm, the deformed will of a person that we should be addressing ourselves to. We cannot stop every threat. When we are told that if we can save even one life, if it were true I would accept that.

If we are so concerned about saving lives, why is the government and why are the people of Canada not more concerned about the technical standards of appliances, of automobiles, of so many of the things we use? Why do we allow smoking? Why are the restrictions on drunken driving not more stringent? This is a red herring.

How will the registration of guns, how will further restrictions on guns and how will this bill on gun control affect the misuse of guns by someone who is determined to cause someone else harm?

[Translation]

Mr. Nunez: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I believe the national firearms registration system will provide tighter controls over who owns these firearms and where they are stored. I am not alone in this respect.

In my own riding of Bourassa, in Montreal North, 15 per cent of my constituents are senior citizens. I discussed this with them. We had a number of meetings, and I asked them: What do you think about gun control and the bill announced by the Minister of Justice? All senior citizens are in favour of tighter controls because they want to be able to go out, and walk in the park, without fear of being attacked by some crazy person with a gun. And many people would agree.

I spoke to the labour movement, the Canadian Labour Congress, which represents more than two million members in this country, and especially in Quebec, they agree with the broad principles of this bill. I spoke to physicians and health care workers. They also want tighter gun controls in Canada. I think the majority of the people in Canada and Quebec, and in my riding, support the broad principles of this bill.

[English]

Mr. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I feel that it is a great opportunity for me to speak on the topic of gun control. I hope to talk about some of the concerns expressed by the Reform Party and go through a whole series of situations in terms of support, some of the statistics that support strong gun control.

• (1555)

Let me start with a basic premise on why gun control is good for Canada. Gun control is not simply about controlling guns. It is about public safety. It is about crime prevention.

Do members think—I have asked this question to people often—if we have more guns on the street we will have more crime? Consistently the answer is yes, the more guns we have on the street, the more crime we will have. If you can go out and buy a gun in a local store, do you think we will have more crime? The answer consistently is yes.

Is that not logical? If there are fewer guns on the street and if the government makes it more difficult for people to get more guns, will we not have less crime? My basic premise is if we have fewer guns on the street and those that are there are restricted and managed, we will have a safer society and safer communities.

The other part of it is just the psychological effect, the fact that we know as a society we do not tolerate people having guns, and the fact people know it is illegal to have guns on the street and that we do have restrictions. That will also help in determining that psychologically there is less fear in our society. That is very important as well.

Let me look at the support that this bill has right across this country, whether it be in Alberta, British Columbia or anywhere else. There is tremendous support for this bill. For example, from October 5 to October 25, 1994 Environics Research Group Limited conducted a national survey of Canadian public attitude