

In this case "them" is the gun collectors. I continue:

If they want to get rid of them, they can sell or give them to a museum, they can export them to other sellers; or they can sell them to other collectors. I think, rather than what you suggest, that they are suddenly valueless, the effect of this legislation is that those guns will become increasingly more valuable.

True, rare collectors' items, be they guns, antique furniture, postage stamps of 1830 vintage, gain in value with time; to that extent the minister is correct. But as the bill is written, the bona fide gun collector can only dispose of his guns to another bona fide collector. I can foresee that, ultimately, the collector who survives all his contemporaries will end up owning some 4,500 automatic weapons, enough to equip his own army. Surely the legislation does not contemplate this? Surely the minister does not intend one or two people to wind up owning, say, 2,500 automatic weapons each? But this, precisely, will be the effect of the bill unless it is changed.

The minister is concerned about the bona fide collector, but what about the fellow about whom the hon. member for Lafontaine-Rosemont (Mr. Lachance) questioned the minister? What will be the position of the heirs of an estate who inherit automatic weapons, or weapons classed as collector's items? Will they be entitled to retain them? The minister said no, not unless they are bona fide collectors. And here the hon. member for Lafontaine-Rosemont, because of his legal training, focused attention on the great weakness of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, you can walk into many homes in this country and hear an owner say, "Look at this beautiful shotgun, or at this beautiful weapon. It has a Damascus steel barrel, was made by James Riley and Sons, of Bond Street, London; is it not made beautifully?" He will tell you it does not take present day shells or bullets, but is a work of art in its own right. Or he may say, to you, "I have here an old Winchester 44-40 with a hexagonal barrel. It's the sort of gun which won the west. My grandfather left it to my father, and he left it to me." What will that man's position be under the law?

Or, what will be the position of the man who does not know the value of the weapon he inherited from his father, who inherited from his father before him? I am not totally satisfied with what the minister has said in this regard?

This bill will encourage a fellow to take his gun to the local police station, run by federal, provincial or municipal police, and turn it in. I assume he will get a receipt for it. That is the end of the story.

● (2110)

Who gets the guns? The minister has not provided an adequate answer to that question. Who falls heir to these valuable antiques? Once they are in the hands of the police, what happens to them? Does the officer in charge pass them to another whom he happens to know is a bona fide gun collector and has an interest in this type of weapon, a gun that may be worth \$500, \$600 or \$1,000?

Is the gun taken out and destroyed because no one in that particular office appreciates the historical value of that weapon? Is it sold into a collection with the Crown receiving the assets? Does the police officer pass it to a friend who sells

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it to a collection and the police officer gathers the benefits? By making that kind of remark, I am not impugning our police officers. I am just saying it is a possibility. The minister has not extended his arguments into that area.

I recognize the very legitimate concern of the minister when it comes to automatic weapons. Plainly it was demonstrated at committee when the minister had at that time an AR-15. It was clearly demonstrated when we had a representative from CASAL appear before the committee and tell about the difficulty he was having packing an AR-15 in the hills. Why he would ever want to pack that in the hills as a sporting rifle really stretches my imagination. Conversely, there are those who have such automatic weapons which they may wish to add to their collection, and who would not be going into the hills. I hope they would not be going into the hills.

I suggest to the minister, in answering the genuine concerns of these gun collectors, that it might be helpful at this eleventh hour if he met with them to determine whether they are prepared to take some measure of responsibility and collectively agree that in some fashion, acceptable to them and the ministry, they will deactivate those automatic weapons.

The gun collectors would of course present the argument that to deactivate would reduce the value to the collector. It would also reduce the value to the criminal if the home of a collector should be broken into and such a weapon should be stolen. The minister has indicated that has occurred. It was also clearly demonstrated at committee that not one charge of abuse of the regulations pertaining to these weapons has been recorded against a bona fide collector. That is an area the minister fails to take into consideration as well.

I suggest it might be helpful to the minister to seek an accommodation with those particular collectors. It might help to resolve an issue that will otherwise be resolved with some degree of acrimony and bitterness.

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to support the proposition put forward by the last speaker. I say to the minister that I, unlike the government, believe in giving people the benefit of the doubt.

I do not believe the government has yet reached the stage in its great design for controlling the lives of Canadians that it has any objection to Canadians owning property. However, owning guns appears to be a heinous thing for the average Canadian. As has been pointed out, there is something intrinsically valuable about them. I do not see why the government and the minister, at least by implication, feel there is something evil about collecting guns. Unless there is some other reason, they would not be bringing this unnecessarily restrictive provision.

What are the statistics with regard to violence involving breaches of the criminal law by people who have gun collections or own guns on the basis of collecting them, formally or informally? The last speaker indicated there were no known violations. That may or may not be so. I suspect that gun collectors as a group are among the most law-abiding of all the citizens of this country. I also believe that among their ranks,