

Measures Against Crime

lums who were bent on stealing his goods. Before he began his next trip northward he bought a licence to carry a hand-gun and bought a gun and shoulder holster. When he arrived back at the same village and stopped for the night at the same hotel, he made sure to tell the proprietor that he was now carrying a weapon, and showed him his licence. Word was circulated by the proprietor, and from that time forward the local wild boys ceased their violent antics and treated my uncle with the deepest respect. He had no more trouble; he never had to fire the gun and he never used it. The moral of that old, true story of 1880 holds true today. Outlaws respect one thing only: the naked power of right, rigidly reinforced by a potent deterrent.

● (1740)

Every time this government is engaged in devious activity, or when it finds itself in an impasse over some boondoggle like this attempt to fight crime by impinging on the few rights left to Canadians, the Prime Minister creates a new diversion. Taking this government on past performance, Mr. Speaker, we must assume, when debating these gun control proposals, that this is only the beginning. When the bureaucracy needed to administer this law is in place, we can expect some further action with respect to gun owners. The Minister of Justice knows full well that you do not fight crime by taking away the rights and privileges of law-abiding citizens. Even if we only assume that the minister is an intelligent man, we must assume that he is party to a plan that is broader and more encompassing than the provisions in this legislative proposal.

It has already been pointed out that, like all other legislation pushed through this House by the present government, this bill in its present form is open-ended enough to allow for extension and expansion without end. It has been estimated that it will take at least 6,000 man-years of labour to conduct an initial registration of gun owners in Canada and the cost could run into millions. We have found through bitter experience that this government exceeds all estimates by four or five times and even more.

What is to happen to the bureaucracy after the registration has been accomplished? Again, our experience has shown that these bureaucracies, these temporary agencies remain in place, intact. In fact, like ill-starred Information Canada, it grows and grows with nothing meaningful to do and doing nothing meaningful. With nothing to do, the gun agency will be seeking things to do with its personnel, its time and its power. If my fears are realized, this agency will become even more restrictive. The big bosses in Ottawa will surely find some ways to further harass the law-abiding gun owners. They will have to justify their existence and protect their jobs.

Much has been said about how much the fee should be for gun owners to register their guns. If it gets to that point, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that there should not be any fee. Gun owners are being asked to come forward voluntarily to register and tell the bureaucrats how many guns they own. I own three guns, but do not use them any more. Once I was an ardent hunter. I keep the three guns at home. I think they are serviceable. I do not mind registering them, but that is as far as I want to go.

[Mr. Alkenbrack.]

Since the Minister of Justice cannot show how this proposed law could play any part in helping to control gun-related crime, there should not be any fee for registering. In these days of efficient computers, surely one computer could efficiently register all the serial numbers and makes of the millions of guns in this country. The process would not be costly and would not need a large bureaucracy. Why not take advantage of the computer age? As it is, the government wants to put another burden on the backs of Canadians. The fee will be just another imposition on top of a totally unnecessary and uncalled for restriction. I say to the Prime Minister, give us free registration.

Before I conclude my remarks on the gun control section of this bill I would like to say that it is already an offence under the Criminal Code to own an automatic weapon, a sawed-off rifle, shotgun or unregistered pistol. I suggest that what we need instead of restrictions on law-abiding, long-gun owners, is more severe minimum sentences for those convicted of possessing and using these restricted or prohibited weapons. Some judges today are inclined to apply the slap on the wrist in these cases rather than to impose a deterrent sentence. Perhaps we should demand minimum sentences in some cases.

As I said before, I deplore the restriction by closure which will limit our time for debating this bill. When the bill is in committee, I hope the necessary amendments will be moved so that we can improve the bill and make it more satisfactory and fair to all Canadians.

Mr. Alan Martin (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, before beginning my main comments on the second reading of Bill C-83, may I commend my House leader for showing the essential leadership needed if parliament is to survive as a useful institution.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Paproski: You will live to regret it.

Mr. Martin: After the motion has been put we shall debate for the bill for four more days, which will give more than enough time for members on all sides to make their contributions. It is important to send the bill to committee soon. In committee it will be examined by members of parliament and we may hear contributions from such members of the public as may wish to appear.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: What guarantee is there that you will not impose closure in committee?

Mr. Paproski: You are lucky you can speak today.

Mr. Martin: So far, the discussion on this bill has centred mainly on the two aspects of gun control and wiretapping. Bear in mind, this bill is far more extensive than that and covers much more than those two subjects. Indeed, it is useful to remind hon. members of the title of the bill, an act for the better protection of Canadian society against perpetrators of violent and other crime. The bill encompasses some 73 pages and contains many important clauses. It is, therefore, a mistake for hon. members to suggest that the bill deals mainly with guns and wiretapping. It is an all-encompassing bill and must be so considered.