

In terms of practical impacts, this bill will interfere on a daily basis with the traditions and practices of aboriginal peoples. For example, the simple task of a non-hunter collecting firearms after a hunting expedition to place in storage will require possession of a licence and a registration certificate for each gun. Likewise, the need to lend a firearm to women and children left in the camp to protect themselves from animal predators will become a bureaucratic nightmare under this bill. The storage and transportation regulations are not only not suitable to the North, they are unsafe in an environment where animal predators are a fact of life.

Honourable senators, the registration requirements of the bill will mean that those people in the North with the greatest need for a gun and the least access to government services will wait the longest to obtain the necessary permission; permission that they should not need to seek because their way of life is constitutionally protected.

These are just a few examples of how this bill will harm aboriginal peoples and how it will infringe upon their rights. This bill will force aboriginal peoples to either forgo their rights or fight again in the courts to have those rights recognized. This is not fair; this is not equitable; this is not constitutional. We must adopt the very modest amendment proposed by the Senate committee. In doing so, we will be giving the government another chance to get it right, and to uphold the honour of the Crown.

That is why, honourable senators, I stand today to urge the adoption of the aboriginal amendments. I do recognize the importance of the requirement for gun control, but not at the expense of aboriginal peoples.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Watt, I regret to interrupt you, but your ten minutes are up.

• (1630)

Senator Graham: Honourable senators, I very much regret interrupting Senator DeWare, but we did allow Senator Atkins to go over the allotted ten minutes. If Senator Watt does not require more than two or three minutes then, with unanimous agreement, we could allow him to continue.

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Senator Watt: Honourable senators, just to conclude my remarks, I should like to touch on the fact that firearms, at times, are used for wrongful purposes. I, too, sympathize with the families of those who have been victimized by the misuse of firearms.

I would ask all honourable senators to give serious consideration to what we said in committee and in this house. I should like to express my appreciation to those who have spoken on behalf of our people. Please continue to do so!

This is probably the first time that, day in and day out, I have heard speeches about aboriginal people being made by everyone in the house. Perhaps one day our French and English people will receive the same attention. There are many similarities between our French society and our aboriginal society. At times, we are misinterpreted as wanting to be different, or wanting to have more than anyone else. That is really not the case. We must face the fact that we are slightly different in some ways because of our way of life.

Hon. Mabel M. DeWare: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak on the importance of the vote which will occur later today on Bill C-68. I must confess one thing has been puzzling me today, and that is: Why is the government leading the public to believe that these amendments cannot be sent back to the other place without ultimately killing this bill? That is not true. We saw an editorial in *The Globe and Mail* today, and we have seen other news articles to that end. By whom is this idea being fostered?

We are not trying to kill this bill. Several weeks ago we agreed on a date in this house by which we would vote on this bill. We did this in order to allow the government ample time to deal with any potential amendments.

If the government did not feel that was a sufficient amount of time, it should have been made known then. We did appreciate the fact that we had an extra week or two in which our members could travel. We feel that is probably one of the most important things that has happened in all of our deliberations on this bill.

I am sure you will agree that the government has more than ample time to pass this bill, even with amendments. If this bill does not become law, it is not our fault.

Many of us want to see parts of this bill amended. However, we compromised partly because we want this bill passed by the Christmas break. How then can anyone really say or believe that we are trying to kill this bill? The amendments which were chosen are fair; they represent the concerns of many witnesses who appeared before our committee. That, honourable senators, is the role of the Senate.

Some of my honourable colleagues have already explained the thinking behind the amendments proposed by the Conservative members. However, I would like to focus on a section of the bill which has not been amended. I refer especially to the gun registration section. Will registration really work, or are we just entering into another bureaucratic nightmare?

The current firearms registration process, which has been in effect for over 60 years, is woefully ineffective. Firearms are often inaccurately described. Assembly numbers are recorded as serial numbers. Records are lost. Cheap copies of guns are registered under well-known brands they resemble. Furthermore, firearm owners move or die, and often, as is human nature, there are time lapses before address changes are reported to the proper authorities, if they are ever reported.