

Gun registration isn't, and hasn't been, a panacea for violence. There is a major danger this version may push some people from the proud Canadian position to gun ownership as a right. I don't want to see any further Americanization of this country. But it could happen. You can only prod a buffalo so far before it turns and stampedes. Of course we need to get guns off the street. But we need workable solutions to violence. Not just feel-good populist fixes that push the problem further out of sight, but not out of range.

Legislation that creates civil disobedience and drives a further wedge into an emotional issue is counter-productive. It merely adds to bloated bureaucracies, off-loads costs onto provinces, takes valuable time from the police...

No guns are manufactured in Canada. Since 1979, every gun is either smuggled into the country, or it comes across the border legally and is recorded at the point of wholesale and retail distribution. We already have a comprehensive way to record gun ownership. But nobody has bothered telling the clerks at Canadian Tire to slip the data on-line to their friendly police service so it can be cross-referenced with other information.

Many arguments have been presented on Bill C-68, but I will try to reflect the presentations of the ordinary and wonderful Canadians who made presentations to senators who took the time to listen to what they said.

I will say a little bit about the politics of the bill. Pat Lorjé is right. This is not a bill about gun control. There is massive support in Canada for gun control. I know of no one, not even one among all the people who came to see us, who is against gun control. Why, then, are we having this debate? Why are millions of Canadians who support gun control and who own firearms so vehement in their opposition to Bill C-68?

Bill C-68 is not about saving the lives of people who have lost loved ones. That is part of the problem with the politics of this bill. People who support gun control are told that because they do not support gun registration, they are somehow involved in the deaths of Canadians caused by guns, and that there is some sort of violence inflicted on people because guns are not registered. These are the same people who came to us and told us that they support gun control.

• (2120)

Why is there this political turbulence? Why is there this great division in our country over an issue about which everyone agrees, gun control? Because it is Bill C-68; because Bill C-68 does not save any lives and will not save any lives. I resent the fact that the presenters of Bill C-68 use violence in our society as the reason for this bill, particularly its gun registration aspect.

They say that those who oppose the gun registration aspect somehow do not have the same concerns.

Proposing a bill which potentially criminalizes people who are law abiding is in itself a violent act. Proposing a bill that the Prince Albert Tribal Council, which represents 17,000 people, including all those who live on reserves in Northern Saskatchewan, has said they will not obey, is, in itself, a violent act. Proposing a bill that causes ordinary, normal, law-abiding Canadians to say that they will not register their guns is in itself a violent act. Proposing a bill that divides rural Canadians from urban Canadians, and those living on Indian reserves from white people is, in itself, a violent act.

Who the heck do we in the Senate think we are? We are legislators and parliamentarians. As the friendly senator from Nova Scotia said, "Who do we think we are, passing a bill that causes these great divisions?"

I am not a gun owner. However, I am acquainted with guns. We sold them in our family's general store. I do not have memories of these firearms as instruments of violence, nor were they. People had them because they used them and, in most cases, because they needed them. No one carried them around. You learned to use them the same way you learned to use an axe or a knife. My negative image of firearms comes from television and from the cities. It is of bad people using violent means to achieve violent ends, where people who live in suburbs hire their guns. They fill the streets with police, all with guns. They have access to 911 and are 10 minutes away from the local man with a gun.

Up in Northern B.C., in Yukon and the northern part of Saskatchewan, there are no police. There is no one protecting the people there from the cougars in the Kootenays, as we were told, of which there are some 200 now, because you cannot kill them. One woman told us of watching her child being attacked by a cougar. By the time she could get her gun out of the box and gain access to her bullets, the child was dead. That is a stupid law, anyway.

City people tell rural people that it is not okay to carry a rifle from one place to another place. Gee whiz, you cannot go to a community meeting, you may have a gun in your truck. At community meetings in Montreal, there are guns everywhere.

We have this political debate going on over a bill which is called a gun control bill, something which we all support. Why did they write the bill in such a way as to cause this great division?

In order to acquire a firearm in Canada, you must take the firearms safety education training program. You must apply for a firearms acquisition certificate, which includes 35 questions. You are even asked if you are happily married, if you are divorced or not, or whether you are bankrupt. It requires two references, two photos and \$50. The police check records, interview references, neighbours, employees and spouses. The firearms acquisition certificate is issued after a mandatory 28-day wait.