

Government Orders

in the western world. How can there possibly be such problems where guns are strictly controlled?

Maybe it has something to do with cultural and economic forces. Maybe it has something to do with organized crime, drug dealing, racial tension, grinding miserable poverty and a collapsed public education system.

Gun control is an artificially induced smoke screen. It is a cynical ploy to distract the public from the real issues, not the least of which is the breakdown of our criminal justice system. The government helped create this highly emotional issue and now it is playing it for all it is worth. This issue has absolutely no relation to crime control and it is absurd that the justice minister has made the mixture. It is a lot easier to make scapegoats of decent citizens than it is to admit that our justice system is misdirected.

To give the devil his due, this bill does contain some good features actually aimed at criminals instead of ordinary citizens; the four-year minimum sentence for violent offences committed with a firearm, for example, although those receiving this penalty will still be eligible for parole.

In 1978, I told anyone who would listen that we had started down a long slow road to public disarmament, that future violent crimes would serve as excuses for more bureaucracy, that registration by serial number would follow and that the last step would be piecemeal confiscation of weapons, picking off gun owners one at a time. It is all coming true.

Half a million handguns are going to be effectively confiscated, no matter how the minister tries to sugar coat his proposal. Confiscation of registered long guns will begin, as it is already begun with handguns, through a process of natural evolution and will probably be spurred by some horrendous crime such as the Montreal massacre.

Public hysteria is a wonderful tool for government. Early in 1941, before Pearl Harbour, the Government of Canada confiscated the arms of Canadians of Japanese origin living on the west coast. Remember, we were not at war and these were Canadians, but their guns were taken away.

The political establishment was delighted and the tame establishment press bayed its approval, just as it is baying its approval for the proposals on the table in the House today.

• (1750)

This bill is a classic example of the theory of government which states that everything not compulsory shall be forbidden. It is a bit of statism, and a bit of statism, like a bit of cancer, is not good for you.

James Madison said it best: "There are more instances of the abridgement of freedom of people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations".

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to take part in today's debate on second reading of Bill C-68, an act respecting firearms and other weapons.

Canada has had a long history in the monitoring and controlling of firearms. Canada has had laws restricting the possession and the use of firearms since 1877. These were a nationwide permit system for the carrying of small arms in effect in 1892. All handguns have had to be registered since 1934. In 1951 a centralized registry for restricted firearms was established under the control of the commissioner of the RCMP.

The classification system of prohibitive weapons and restricted weapons including all handguns and non-restricted long guns was introduced in 1968. This scheme was significantly enhanced by a number of amendments in 1977. The major addition was the creation of the firearms acquisition certificate, FAC, a screening system for those wishing to acquire any firearm including non-restricted hunting rifles and shotguns.

A new administrative regime involving local firearms officers and chief provincial firearms officers appointed by the provinces was also established. Currently the provinces administer the FAC system and most overall gun control. This regime was relatively untouched for over 11 years until the passage of Bill C-17 which received royal assent on December 5, 1991.

To my knowledge the last set of regulations pertaining to Bill C-17 came into force on January 1, 1994 and prescribed the criteria for competence in the safe handling and use of firearms. Barely a year after the implementation of Bill C-17's last set of regulations members are being asked to consider yet another firearms bill.

I propose to offer my comments on what I consider the positive aspects of Bill C-68. I will also offer my opinions on the parts of this bill which require more consideration by the justice committee and I will give my reasons as to why certain sections of this bill should be deleted in their entirety.

The most positive feature of this bill is its no nonsense approach to the criminal use of firearms. To that extent I applaud the proposals to create new offences for the criminal use of firearms, including the minimum four-year sentence for using a firearm in the commission of violent offences and the minimum mandatory sentence of one year for the use of a replica firearm, mandatory jail sentences for the possession of stolen firearms and stiff penalties for illegally importing and trafficking in firearms.