

Private Members' Business

As one of the members indicated earlier, one of the truisms on the subject of guns in Canada is that their ownership is a privilege. I think most people are aware that in the United States the ownership of firearms is a right, it is constitutionally enshrined. Not so in Canada. We have had a different history, a different development in this area. It is a privilege and as such, it is a privilege that governments for many, many years have taken an interest in and one that quite legitimately is the subject of debate in this House. I was somewhat surprised to hear the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell say that it was easier to buy a gun in Canada than it is to buy a case of beer. That is absolute nonsense.

I see the member for Timiskaming beside me nodding his head. It is quite obvious that the representative of the Liberal Party is not a gun owner because one of the things I discovered from talking with various groups during the lead-up to Bill C-80 is that there are all kinds of procedural and administrative wrangles and difficulties that an individual must go through.

One of the things that struck me that Bill C-80 could do would be to clear up some of the administrative difficulties faced by legitimate hunters and sportsmen in Canada by having a discussion of this matter in Parliament.

I was shocked as well to hear the comments made by the members of the New Democratic Party. They said it has taken too long, the minister is gutless, how come it took a year to come up with this bill? Well you cannot have it both ways. If a bill is introduced into Parliament and there have been no consultations, the NDP jumps up and down, screams and yells, and says: "You should have consulted with people. How come you did not get together with the various interest groups and individuals across Canada before you presented this bill?"

So that is exactly what we did with Bill C-80. I know, because I was a part of the discussions. The former Minister of Justice, the present transport minister, during the course of the previous summer invited major national groups who have a particular interest in this subject to sit down to discuss their concerns. I was very pleased and privileged to sit in on those discussions so I can tell you what they had to say. Unlike the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell who thinks it is a simple

job, a simple business, to own a gun, they had many legitimate complaints of an administrative type that I was pleased to see incorporated into Bill C-80.

When the present Minister of Justice assumed her responsibility she continued the process. She did not start over again because she and the members on this side wanted to present a bill to Parliament, but she continued the process. She heard from groups that had not been heard from by with the previous Minister of Justice.

Now there is a problem with that with the NDP. You heard them, Mr. Speaker. They said that it is a terrible thing to do, a terrible thing to be consulting with people before you bring legislation into this House. I could not disagree more with the members of the NDP on that.

I was pleased as well that we tabled this bill right before the House ended, because in my opinion it provided an opportunity for sportsmen, hunters, pistol clubs, and other interested individuals over the course of the summer when they would be getting together to have a look at this bill. I see the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that he is as vocal on this subject as he is on acid rain and on every issue in our caucus. He has spoken to me about this. And I see the member for Macleod who was good enough to invite me out to his riding several weeks ago to talk on this subject. What I said to them is that this bill is not written in stone.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I have sat on every legislative committee in the justice area since 1984. There has not been one bill that has gone through that has not been changed at the committee stage, or at the report stage, and Bill C-80 is not going to be the first one.

So I say to the members of the NDP and the members of the Liberal Party that if they want to see action on Bill C-80, if they want to see action on all the bills that are before this House, go down and talk to their good friends in the Senate. That is where the log jam is. The members of the New Democratic Party know that very well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 96(1), this item is dropped from the Order Paper.