

Measures Against Crime

Mr. Robert Daudlin (Kent-Essex): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents of Kent-Essex and, I believe, on behalf of many Canadians ranging far from that constituency, I see in this bill the answer to what has been a public need, and indeed public demand for assurance that there will be protection from those who, for whatever reason, have decided to strike out against society and declare that they have no use for it, no use for the rights of individuals other than themselves, and would deny their co-citizens even the right to life.

Although I am quick to admit that the public is looking to this legislation to determine whether it supplies the assurance of protection it seeks, I am not one who is convinced that past legislation has been grossly lacking in that protection. Rather, I would want to satisfy myself that the bill does not go so far in an attempt to provide the trappings of public protection that, in the process, it denies many of the justifiable and lawful rights our citizens generally have been able to enjoy up to this point.

I might debate, and indeed agree, with some of my friends on the other side that the sheer size of this bill precludes in some small measure a meaningful intervention on all of its many facets. I would not, however, argue that that precludes a meaningful debate and that because of its size it should be broken up into many parts. Rather, I propose to limit my remarks, as others have done, and deal with perhaps two of the issues, gun control, and electronic surveillance.

In principle I am able to agree that the bill, including the measures in those two areas, will indeed have my support. These measures are aimed at strengthening the criminal law and its administration as it applies to crimes of violence. I view as laudable the objective of the measure regarding guns, which is stated to be the screening out of potential misuse, to restrict the general availability of guns without undue harassment of legitimate users for hunting and other sports, to enforce high standards in the safe keeping and proper use of firearms, and to discourage the use of firearms in the commission of crime.

I have no quarrel with the improvisation of a licensing system, as I see this as a far fairer and more productive system of gun control than that of registration of firearms, since it is obviously aimed at the individuals who would own and use guns as opposed to the actual weapons themselves.

The hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Darling) earlier this afternoon was speaking about break and entry thefts in his area, and he felt that even though proper precautions might be taken for the storage of guns, they would be taken when crime was committed. I suggest that in most cases people who break and enter cottages—as described by the hon. member—or a home or a place of business, break and enter not seeking guns but money or other valuables which might be sold. When they fall upon or come upon guns within those premises they use the opportunity, having found those guns, to take them away perhaps to sell or perhaps to use later. When describing this type of occurrence the hon. member suggested that the bill before us would be of absolutely no use whatsoever. Surely the hon. member cannot argue that any law prohibiting the use and ownership of guns is not a deterrent. I cannot agree with him.

● (2130)

Intentionally or accidentally, that hon. member described this legislation as legislation requiring the registration of guns. I think all hon. members present know that people confuse licensing with registration. Many Canadians fear that a registration system will be unproductive and create a bureaucracy. It is known that police forces, hunting associations, and other associations do not support the registration system. Calling this system a registration system is misnaming it. It is a misnomer. This is to be a licensing system, not a registration system, and can be likened to the system of licensing automobiles. I invite all hon. members to consider this bill in its true light, as a licensing system, and ignore the myth perpetrated on the public by the media to the effect that this is to be a registration system. They are different and should not be confused.

An hon. Member: There is to be licensing on what basis?

Mr. Daudlin: Mr. Speaker, obviously on the basis of competence to use a gun.

Mr. Towers: How can you say that?

Mr. Daudlin: I suggest that my hon. friend should look at the legislation.

Mr. Towers: Yes, but who will decide? Will the hon. member not say?

Mr. Daudlin: I believe that it is now well established that it is not the firearm in itself that is the culprit, but the man or the woman who holds it. I believe that there is an obligation on society as a whole to assure that individuals who would use firearms have the physical and mental capacity to use those weapons in a safe and a reasonable manner. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the hunting and gun clubs in my riding have been champions of the rights of individual Canadian citizens who continue to enjoy the use of firearms for sport, be it target shooting or hunting or, indeed, the collecting of weapons. They were among the first to indicate that a fair licensing law which would have certain safeguards to assure that the licensing officials do not have too much uncontrolled and unobserved authority would be a good thing. Indeed they have offered their assistance in terms of providing training classes and instructors for the express purpose of providing the potential gun owner and handler with the necessary knowledge to handle a gun safely.

I am supporting this provision of the legislation which would propose to put up a licensing provision for firearms, while I would advocate that great care must be taken to assure that the administration of that sort of licensing must not be allowed to become so large and cumbersome that the cost thereof becomes in itself an undue burden for those who would legally pursue the ownership and use of firearms for sport and hunting.

Having said all that, I am concerned about particular subclauses of the bill dealing with gun control, beginning with proposed section 95(1) which reads:

Every one who sells, barter, gives, lends, transfers or delivers any firearm or ammunition to a person who is not the holder of a licence