

Criminal Code

the power to determine who may or may not own a firearm is an alarming example of a philosophy of prohibiting all that is not mandatory. If this bill which I think is ill-conceived were to be passed, firearms in Canada would quite simply be limited to an elite. As I already heard some people say, it would then be easy, even child's play, for a government with delusions of grandeur to confiscate all firearms on the pretence of emergency and thus ascertain, whether people want it or not, the docility of the people. Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not mean by that that this government is already on the road to dictatorship but it is, admittedly, a beginning because every time we take a step in the direction of greater government control, we move toward a future where our children and grandchildren will have no hope.

[English]

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vergreville): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words on the motion advanced by my colleague, the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams). I wholeheartedly support the principle of the motion. What bothers us on this side of the House is the growing propensity of government to bring forth legislation in *carte blanche* form which gives it blanket powers to do anything, incidental or otherwise, with that legislation. The bill before us affects every Canadian, so it is important that in this case the law be clearly defined. In his remarks, the hon. member for Calgary North pointed out that when this measure was introduced in 1976, 3,326 orders in council were passed, and of those 653 were published in the *Canada Gazette*. That makes it very difficult for those who want to live within the limitations of this law to be sure what the law is at any given time.

As I said, the government has brought many pieces of legislation into this House which point up the increasing amount of power delegated to the governor in council in terms of the proclamation of regulations and taking decisions within the framework of the legislation. There is, for example, Bill C-33, to amend the National Transportation Act, which is currently before the House. It puts a tremendous amount of power in the hands of the governor in council, to the point where it can almost dictate the modal integration of the transportation system in this country. It can almost dictate what sort of freight articles will move by which mode to a given place.

Bill C-17, to amend the Air Canada Act, is another example of legislation which places broad discretionary powers in the hands of the governor in council. In many cases the provisions of the bill are so broad that they fortify the powers of the agency, in this case the Canadian Transport Commission. We see similar legislation in the field of communications, and are told that such legislation is to be brought forward in connection with the National Energy Board. This is very disturbing to those who want to live within the law and makes it very difficult to provide a sense of stability and continuity of regulations as they apply to various sectors.

It is interesting to note that at this time when we have a serious energy crisis in this country people involved in energy, particularly oil, tell us they have to comply with 375 pieces of

provincial and federal legislation in order to carry on business. The proliferation of order in council proclaimed regulations makes it all the more difficult for industry to know the state of the law under which it operates.

● (1620)

Undoubtedly the Minister of Justice finds it difficult to obtain acceptance of this bill. Its predecessor, Bill C-83, last year found little favour with rural Canadians and urban dwellers. Bill C-51 is a watered-down version of C-83, and the minister has campaigned vigorously in the hope of securing its passage during the present session of parliament.

Mr. Woolliams: He ought to have been in Camrose recently.

Mr. Mazankowski: Yes, he should have been in Camrose last Saturday to see how vigorously some people object to the bill. I understand his colleague from Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) does not view the bill with favour. I am surprised he has not spoken out against it, for the people of his constituency are not unlike the people in mine and they do not view this bill with favour. Although Bill C-51 is not quite as harsh as Bill C-83, some people still think it is an unknown quantity. We do not know what the regulations will say. As the hon. member for Palliser (Mr. Schumacher) said, at the very least the committee should have been shown the regulations as an indication of what the government had up its sleeve. Many suspect this is but the government's foot in the door.

Mr. Woolliams: The camel's head in the tent.

Mr. Mazankowski: It could lead to wider powers. It is the skeleton, the frame if you like, for orders in council, and perhaps for amending legislation in future. Therefore, we must consider this bill carefully and cautiously, especially since many people in rural areas will find compliance with its provisions difficult. The May 10 issue of *Farm and Country* had this to say on the subject in an article entitled, "Farmers fear bureaucratic rules":

What the urban press has viewed as highly diluted gun legislation, rural Ontario seems unmoved in the thinking the justice minister Ron Basford's new measures are "just the old Bill C-83 dressed up."

Mr. Woolliams: It is a sort of tuxedo bill.

Mr. Mazankowski: Without buttons. I continue quoting:

Main bone of contention is that the latest proposals leave so much to the whim of bureaucrats and orders in council, none of which are reviewed beforehand by the House of Commons. Wallaceburg hog farmer, Don Crowe, contends that present gun owners are being ignored, but once the skeleton bill gets passed they could be included at the first public outcry in the press.

I repeat, present gun owners are being ignored. What happened to the concept of participatory democracy so much in vogue in 1968? Some groups which wished to tell the parliamentary committee some of their concerns about the legislation and make suggestions were not given the opportunity to testify. Is it any wonder farmers like Don Crowe fear the implications of this so-called skeleton bill the provisions of which could be expanded at the first public outcry in the press? I continue quoting: