

possible that it was the existence of this armed and prepared citizen army which caused Hitler to think twice about trying to invade Switzerland during the second world war.

Quite apart from the required military drill, rifle and pistol shooting as sport are quite widely indulged in by the Swiss. Yet in spite of large numbers of all types of guns in the land of the Swiss people and their widespread availability and generally unrestricted use, Switzerland has one of the lowest crime rates of any country in the world. In fact violent crimes of all kinds are rare in Switzerland. The same Interpol sample I mentioned a few moments ago shows that in the late 1960's Switzerland had a murder rate of 0.70 per 100,000 population, one of the lowest in the world.

There is an often repeated and rather trite expression to the effect that guns do not kill people, people kill people. Those in the office of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) responsible for this legislation must have had this expression in mind when they were drafting this bill. The response of the government to the fact that it is not guns, but people with guns, who kill, is to license people.

Bill C-83 is entitled measures to protect society against crime, but the one major and fundamental measure which the government has come up with, and which takes up more than half of this bill, is one which will have the least effect in protecting society against crime: licensing gun owners. I fail to grasp the logic in this type of legislation, that crime can be controlled by controlling the lawful activities of law abiding people. That is what this gun owner licensing law will really do. It is estimated that there are about eight million firearms in the hands of private citizens in Canada. Yet the number of shooting crimes in the country each year, even if we include those committed by criminals who have previous criminal convictions, and therefore possibly including those shootings committed with illegal firearms, is not more than a few hundred at the very most.

Less than 1 per cent of all the firearms owned in Canada are misused. The simple fact is that gun owners are law abiding people who are no more likely to shoot someone with their guns than they are to stab someone with their kitchen knives or to club someone to death with a garden rake. Yet now we have a government which wants to license all gun owners. Why? Well, because it might prevent someone who might otherwise obtain a gun from doing so and thereby prevent an unnecessary shooting death, the government says. I say possibly, but the number of such cases is too few to justify the massive bureaucracy which will be required for this gun owner licensing scheme.

The apologists for the government say that even if gun licensing prevents one unnecessary shooting death it is worth while. Is it not strange that a government which will not execute a mad dog killer but instead permits him to go free and kill again is now so concerned about the one or two shooting deaths which might be prevented by gun owner licensing?

Crime and shooting incidents cannot be affected by controlling law abiding people, which is what gun controls are for. They are not for criminals or political terrorists who will not obtain licences for their guns. Gun controls

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must therefore be for the potential, future criminal amongst the law abiding, but how can he possibly be identified in advance? An individual who at some time in his life might commit a murder of passion in most cases could probably qualify in every way for a gun licence. So could someone who was suddenly to go insane; there would not necessarily be a history of insanity which would prevent him from obtaining a gun licence.

● (2020)

Gun owner licensing might have some effect in preventing tragedies like those which occurred in Brampton and Ottawa last year—I say might. On this chance, this possibility, is owner licensing now going to be imposed on perhaps five million law-abiding Canadian gun owners who have no connection whatever with the Brampton and Ottawa tragedies? Where is the government's logic? It now proposes to set up another government bureaucracy, when all previous gun control schemes in this country and in other countries have proved to be unworkable, cumbersome, tremendously expensive, and completely ineffective in controlling crime and shooting deaths.

This new Canadian version of gun control is not really a gun control program at all, of course. It is people control. The government calls it the bill on peace and security. That title alone sounds suspect to many Canadians. It certainly raised plenty of eyebrows in my constituency of Portage when it was announced last month. How anyone on the government side can even say it without wincing, I do not know. Many of my constituents are beginning to feel that their own peace and security are more threatened by the government's people-control schemes than by any criminal element or mentally unbalanced gun owners.

I do not think that it is much of a secret, Mr. Speaker, that this Liberal government does not have much support out west on the prairies. It certainly could not have done more to make itself less popular in the rural areas of western Canada than to introduce this legislation. Gun ownership in rural Canada is high, much higher than in urban Canada. That is something which I know for a fact—I come from and live in a rural area. Most people from the cities who probably do not know the situation very well will very likely accept that as a fact. We know that farmers and rural families are more likely to own one or more guns than are city dwellers. Yet the incidence of crime in rural Canada is very low. Spectacular shootings are not very common in the small towns, villages, and farming areas of our country. This seems to be more of a urban phenomenon.

Gun violence is to a very great extent an urban phenomenon. This bill, in seeking to combat it, will fall most heavily on those innocent people who have nothing at all to do with the problem, the small town and rural dwellers. Here we have a very clear case of a law penalizing the innocent and doing nothing to control the criminal. Most big city dwellers do not own guns. The government, in its frantic desire to appear to be doing something about increasing urban violence, has brought in this bill, which is really a new gun law which will most affect those who have absolutely nothing to do with urban crime.

How will requiring a farmer to obtain a licence for the gun which he uses for killing rodents or shooting ducks or