

*Measures Against Crime*

twenties. I know guns; I know what they can do. I have seen them used with great discretion, and I have even seen them misused, mainly by people who are inexperienced and have not been trained in their use. But just tell me of anything which can be abused in Canada and which has not been abused, for instance, the automobile, alcohol, drugs, television, and the writer's pen. The easy targets will be those who are underprivileged and unfamiliar with the law.

● (1530)

**An hon. Member:** There is a lot of difference between the pen and the gun.

**Mr. Whittaker:** I notice that the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. Holt) interjects that there is a lot of difference between the pen and the gun, but let me point out that there have been many pens loaded with poison.

**Mrs. Holt:** They don't blow off a head and they don't knock out hearts.

**Mr. Whittaker:** I think the hon. member should go and write another book like "Terror in the Name of God".

**Mrs. Holt:** Maybe you would learn something. Maybe I will write on guns and the dangers of them.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McCleave):** Order, please.

**Mr. Guay (St. Boniface):** Let him go on reading.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McCleave):** Order, please. The hon. member has the floor and there should not be half a dozen other debates taking place on his time.

**Mr. Whittaker:** Mr. Speaker, the easy targets will be those who are underprivileged and unfamiliar with the law. I see the prospect of harassment levelled against innocent people; people who are caught in the web of this law on legal technicalities because of the difficulty they find in adjusting and altering their sports and cultural habits in line with the imposition of this law, which is based on sheer lunacy. This is a form of innocent guilt which is unjust, unnecessary, and inexpedient.

There are areas where steps could legitimately be taken with respect to the use of firearms; for example, the development and administration of an effective safety program, the development of high standards of proficiency amongst sportsmen and hunters. In these respects legitimate sportsmen's organizations throughout the country have never been recognized. Their recommendations have never been acknowledged. They have not been consulted or requested to provide input into the legislation we are considering.

Surely an effective safety program could be worked out jointly between the federal government and the provinces, in consultation with gun clubs, hunters' groups, and fish and game associations. If this legislation is to command the co-operation and support it will need in order to make it work, the minister and the government will have to go to these people and work with them. There are better ways of getting to the core of the criminal problem than using a

[Mr. Whittaker.]

sledge hammer on the innocent law-abiding citizens of this country. Surely, the hunters, target shooters, and gun collectors are not criminals.

If we dealt with our killers and criminals in a firm, harsh way, it would be the first positive step in stemming the tide of rising murder and violence. The law dealing with those who have threatened violence, or use violence in a criminal act, requires tightening up and firmer enforcement. To that extent I welcome the provisions of this bill.

The legitimate gun owner in this particular case should not be the scapegoat. This bill will do very little to deter the criminal. The section dealing with gun control was the government's response to the emotion and hysteria of an already overloaded and frustrated society. It has addressed itself to that element rather than engaging in a penetrating examination of the root causes of the chronic problem, that of violence in this country.

While there is a general disposition on the part of the public to demand some tightening up in the establishment of control and safety standards, in respect of this bill and to the extent it meets these objectives I must say categorically that I find this piece of legislation exceedingly harsh and very offensive. It seems to me that quite a public relations job is being done here.

The government has utilized a kid glove policy in dealing with the criminal element of this country and it now attempts to take it out on the legitimate gun owner. It has responded to the emotions of hysteria in relation to some dramatic episodes that have taken place in the last year or so. These episodes, involving the use of guns, may have involved the use of some other weapon, such as a bomb. My view is that if a person is bound to kill, or has an absolute desire to kill, he will kill in one way or another, whether it be with a gun, bomb, sledge hammer, knife, or the fist.

This is the core of the problem, and that is the problem to which this bill fails to address itself. I repeat that what is needed is stricter enforcement of existing laws and less coddling of criminals. Stricter gun laws will not cut crime, but proper enforcement of the existing laws will.

The Minister of Justice has now used closure to stop the debate on this bill. He said, in a radio broadcast the other day, that the reason for this was that he wanted to get the bill to committee because of all the mail he has had from across Canada. He now understands that the bill was poorly written, needs much discussion in committee, and has to have many amendments.

In my opinion the minister should be severely censured for bringing a bill to the House of Commons which he now realizes was very poorly written. He also realizes there is going to be a great wave of opinion across Canada against such a bill. He also does not like the speeches that are being made by the opposition against this bill, while knowing full well that his own members cannot stand up or do not stand up and say what their constituents are saying to them about the bill.

Surely this is a poor way to run a government when it has to pull this type of closure on the opposition so that they cannot continue to inform the people of Canada about this bill. Surely, this must be one time they must be informed, knowing that we have not had this form of gun