

Government Orders

● (1540)

Women, seniors and Quebecers in general were and are the three groups most in favour of legislative action to restrict the sale of weapons. According to figures from Statistics Canada, between 1978 and 1982, 37 per cent of all murders were committed with firearms. Of the 6,465 crimes committed between 1978 and 1987, 33 per cent were committed using a firearm.

The minister said that on the average, every six days a woman dies from a gunshot wound in Canada. The situation is therefore very serious. However, in my opinion, the minister is afraid to really get to the heart of it. He should have tabled a tougher bill. He extends until the 21st century the time limit for those who currently own firearms to get a certificate in compliance with the minister's action plan.

He has committed the sin of omission on many points in his bill. The Minister of Justice did not pay enough attention to coroner Anne-Marie David's inquest, held in Montreal in the latter part of 1994. Twenty or so witnesses representing various organizations testified about how inconsistent and unclear the regulations were and how the minister's new proposals did not address the problem as a whole.

Government must protect citizens against any fraudulent and dangerous use of firearms. Public safety must be improved by limiting the use of firearms for criminal purposes. I think that all immigrants in Quebec and Canada wish to live in a safe and law-abiding society. I also think that the people do not want Quebec and Canada to become like the United States as far as firearms are concerned.

But at the same time, I would like to see this bill take into consideration the legitimate interests of hunters and farmers. Hunting is a long-standing traditional activity. It is a major leisure and economic activity for many Quebecers and Canadians. Sports shooters have gained international recognition. Many aboriginal people hunt to feed their families. I have nothing against people using weapons for good reasons.

I do not think that in Canada, unlike other countries, we need to be armed to protect ourselves. At least, this is not the kind of society I would like to live in.

[English]

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Bourassa mentioned that about 30 members on the government side will be voting against the bill. I would suggest that he redo his research because many of the concerns that our members had have been addressed in the latest changes to this bill.

I was pleased to hear from him that he personally will be supporting this bill because, as he said, it was a long time

coming. He did comment, though, that the bill did not go quite far enough.

● (1545)

The minister of the environment and wildlife for Quebec stressed that the bill goes too far. I am wondering if he can give us some clarification if this is the same split within his party. He makes a very strong statement that the bill does not go far enough and yet we are hearing another message from that province that the bill has gone too far.

[Translation]

Mr. Nunez: I hope that the dissent within the Liberal caucus with respect to Bill C-68 is not deep-seated. I accept your explanations, but I still think there are some serious problems about this bill within your caucus.

As I said before, we agree with the general principles of the bill. We are in favour of tighter gun controls, especially in Quebec, where we had the tragic killings at l'École polytechnique in Montreal and where other occurrences have made us very much aware of the problem.

I hope that during consideration of the bill in the Justice Committee, we will be able to take a closer look at this legislation and propose amendments that will make it more effective and give it more teeth, and that will also ensure it will come into force as soon as possible. As the hon. member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis said earlier with such passionate conviction, I think society in Canada and Quebec absolutely needs this legislation.

[English]

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Bourassa two questions.

The hon. member indicated that he supported the idea of prohibiting the Mini Ruger which was used in the polytechnique massacre. I can support that and understand that assault weapons are off the list. My constituents support that as well. However, someone who is deranged will find a weapon in some way, whether it is registered or not under this current program. He could have used a sawed off shotgun, for example.

The first question is how would registration have stopped that circumstance from actually happening?

The second question is with regard to a remark the hon. member made concerning universal registration. He said it is a good idea because it will encourage owners to store their guns and ammunition safely. The last House of Commons passed Bill C-17 and put into place legislation that required all people in Canada to store their guns and ammunition safely. It has not lowered the crime rate or the illegal use or misuse of firearms in crimes in any way. How can the hon. member say that universal registration is going to make a difference with regard to this?