

*Measures Against Crime*

● (1420)

I will support firearms legislation that I consider reasonable, sensible and enforceable for another reason that I think is the most important of all. I am a little tired of those who run around spouting what I call the cowboy syndrome. They look and sound like some hick sheriff from Texas, and act like some seven-year old boy playing with a toy gun. Surely we must put an end to this nonsense of anyone with a prison record, a history of violence, of insanity or extreme emotional instability being able to walk in off the street and purchase a rifle or a shotgun. Every responsible gun owner I have talked to agrees that we must put an end to that kind of sloppy nonsense.

We must put an end to a situation in which a 12-year old or a 14-year old can purchase a firearm by mail order. There has been a history in this country of mail order houses selling some weapons that were in fact unsafe; for example, shot guns with twist barrels or old rifles with worn actions. With today's high-powered ammunition, these guns could blow up in your face. There has been little or no control over the quality of these mail order weapons.

Similarly, I feel there needs to be a greater measure of responsibility taken by manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and transporters of firearms and ammunition. Too often the criminal element obtains firearms by hijacking trucks between the factory and the wholesaler. Insufficient precautions and safeguards are taken in the transportation of weapons. Too often wholesalers and retailers are absolutely sloppy about the way they keep firearms. You can go into retail outlets and find guns hanging out in the open in the stores and an expert shoplifter could have a ball. A good burglar could do well by emptying the whole case of weapons and ammunition in an evening. There are insufficient precautions taken by wholesalers, retailers and transporters of firearms and ammunition.

I think it also should be a requirement to keep records similar to those kept by druggists. They keep very close records and are very meticulous in the handling of drugs which could be harmful or dangerous. No druggist or citizen objects to that. Surely it is nothing more than reasonable to expect that the sellers of weapons and ammunition should keep up to date records on these sales, including the names of the purchasers, the serial numbers, the quantities, the quality, the description, and so on. Surely that is nothing more than good sense. No reputable businessman that I know would complain about this. No operator of a reputable gun store or department store I have talked to objects to this. In fact, some of them keep that kind of record on their own now, and it is to their credit that they do. I think it should be a provision of the law that this kind of sensible safeguard should be required of manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and transporters.

Much has been made about the licence fees. I think a reasonable fee of \$5 or so for a licence could not be complained about seriously. The government should not attempt to recover the total costs of licensing from the licensee who wants to own a firearm. That would be putting an unfair financial burden on a small number of people who would be expected to pay the total cost of this measure which attempts to provide greater security for the public at large.

[Mr. Benjamin.]

The federal government should not attempt to collect the full cost from the licence fee, neither should it foist the major part of this cost on the municipalities and provincial governments, since the purpose of this measure is to provide greater safety for the public as a whole. On that basis, surely the public as a whole should bear the major part of that cost through the national government.

If this government and this parliament want maximum co-operation and assistance from the police forces, the municipalities and the provincial governments, the Minister of Justice should be saying that the national treasury will reimburse those sections of society for administering and implementing this legislation. I think it would be unfair to ask the already over-burdened municipal budgets and, in many cases, provincial resources to carry this additional financial burden. I hope the government will do something about that when the bill is before the committee, because the great majority of the people would, in my opinion, support reasonable and enforceable firearms legislation.

There are some ridiculous aspects of this legislation that, hopefully, will be eliminated by the committee or by the House at report stage. We have heard some equally ridiculous statements about the harmful effect of the legislation, most of which have been dreamed up or imagined by those who want to incite unreasoning hysteria across the country. There have been a few in this chamber guilty of that, Mr. Speaker.

In closing, I want to say again that I have a great deal of sympathy for the amendment moved by the hon. member for Calgary North. I may well support that amendment and support the bill in principle on second reading. However, unless the government makes some significant improvement at the committee or report stage—and I hope accepts some sensible and reasonable proposals from members of the opposition and from its own backbenchers—I may find myself having to vote against the legislation on third reading. I may have to conduct myself in the same way I did in respect of the grain stabilization bill. I make no apologies whatsoever for the way I conducted myself in that respect.

It seems to me the government might well take seriously the idea of submitting the subject matter of this bill to the committee where most of the witness could be heard. When the committee then met later on to deal with the actual legislation, it would be in a position to deal with the whole subject much more efficiently and much more quickly. If the subject matter of this legislation were referred to a committee, a great deal more light could be generated by those who wish to submit briefs. We would then have something worth while, rather than the silly heat we have been getting.

I hope the government will seriously consider accepting a number of amendments. We could then proceed later in the summer on the actual legislation and do a lot more, with a lot more thought, than has been the case so far.

● (1430)

[Translation]

**Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-83 that we are now discussing aims at protecting Canadian society against those who commit violent crimes and other