

Criminal Code

I am rather indefinite about how many I own because I am not exactly sure where they are. I have not looked at them for some time. I am quite sure a couple of them are in my son's collection. I would not classify myself as a collector, but if I had five Lugers then I would consider myself a collector of Lugers, or if I had a number of Winchesters of the 98, 87 or 84 class then I would consider myself a collector of Winchesters.

• (2050)

I think what a collector is should be spelled out in the bill. Removing the words "bona fide" does not correct the situation. It is not often you come across a gun collector, because of the cost involved in becoming one. I understand that the value of some Winchesters would be as high as four figures, so you would not need too many of those to become a bona fide collector, in my estimation.

The bill could be strengthened if it indicated just what a collector is. Some people may collect guns in general and others concentrate on one type such as machine guns or Sten guns, yet all consider themselves collectors. Unless the bill specifies what a collector is, there is a danger of people being harassed because they do not know what category they should fit into.

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I should like to add my support to this amendment. The government obviously hopes to do away with gun collectors in time by means of attrition. I think the operative phrase in the clause is "bona fide" but the bill does not define what a "bona fide" gun collector is. Presumably it would apply to a person who is already collecting guns, but no provision is made for people who may begin collections in the future.

Collecting is very popular nowadays. Not long ago a lady in Great Britain wrote her banker asking what she could invest her money in in order to preserve the value of her savings. He said he did not know, but he thought antique furniture was as good as anything. Today many newspapers carry advertisements and extolling the wisdom of buying such things as Kruger rands, which are gold. Apparently the Russians are showing interest, and a Canadian company is getting into the business as well.

Of all the things people collect in order to guard their investment, guns are amongst the most popular. People who served in the armed forces have often become interested in guns and started collecting them. As with stamp collecting, they sometimes have managed to make wise investments—sometimes even better than if they had invested in government bonds, particularly when this government is running the economy. Yet this government seems determined to phase out gun collectors as a group.

The government has not defined what a gun collector is; is it someone who has one gun, three, 50 or 100? As the hon. member for Palliser (Mr. Schumacher) said, thefts of guns and ammunition most often occur from an armoury or a sporting goods store, rarely from a private collection. Someone

[Mr. Peters.]

who steals an automatic will surely have difficulty finding ammunition for it.

To say there is a danger of theft of guns from a bona fide collector is like saying there is likely to be an earthquake in Ottawa today; it could happen but it is a long shot. Presumably there is more chance of criminals finding automatic weapons in military establishments than in any private gun collection.

Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a word on behalf of the collectors in my constituency, especially one who has one of the most beautiful collections you could ever see. The guns are very clean and are kept locked in a glass cupboard.

It is evident from the minister's comments that he hopes gun collections will be a thing of the past. As the hon. member for Dauphin (Mr. Ritchie) said, such collections are rare and are likely to become very valuable. Does the minister have the right to take a collection away from a family that is very proud of it?

• (2100)

We do not know the effect of this legislation. Let the minister say how many criminal acts have been committed with the use of gun collector items. I suspect there are few such incidents, and therefore do not think weapons classified as collectors' items are much of a danger. Why should the minister use the government's majority to take away the rights of Canadians with gun collections? By trying to establish the rights of one group, the minister would infringe on the rights of another. Surely we should not pass legislation which, under the guise on protecting one set of rights, infringes on another.

Mr. Bob Brisco (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I shall begin my remarks by speaking of gun collections, particularly of collections of automatic weapons, and in this regard I share the minister's concern. However, if one reads what the minister said to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs on the clause we are debating, it becomes clear that the minister's remarks made sense up to a certain point, after which they went off into never-never land, into limbo. Two hon. members opposite expressed some genuine concern about the legal aspects of some of this bill's provisions. The minister's reply shows he does not understand the basic interest of the gun collector. I do not expect the minister collects guns. I do not know what he collects—butterflies, perhaps.

Mr. MacKay: No, it's aerosol tins.

Mr. Brisco: The minister cannot be ignorant of the subject. The debate on the previous bill, C-83, broadened his understanding. Perhaps I can do no better than quote something the minister said on June 16 to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs as reported on page 22:25 of the transcript of the proceedings. He said:

No one is taking those guns away from them.