

It is generally accepted that the role of government is to give leadership in the best interests of the public. When a government fails to give the quality of leadership necessary in any aspect of society, where are the people to turn? That is the sad state in which we find ourselves with this government's approach to crime. It has failed to give leadership and now expects us to believe that its peace and security legislation will solve the problem. The law abiding citizens of our country deserve more than that. How can any government that has been lenient in its approach to law enforcement expect legislation such as gun control suddenly to stop the increasing crime rates?

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Gun-related crimes have been steadily increasing. Consequently, the problem of gun control has become an emotional issue and has led many astray from the real problems at hand. There are those who would have us believe that there is a significant relationship between strict gun control laws and gun-related crime. Without getting into a statistical war, I should like to suggest, based on various studies, that unless there are other crime deterrents, crimes carried out with guns do not significantly drop. Canada, for example, has what are accepted to be very tight laws with regard to handguns. Yet in 1973 there were 56 persons murdered with handguns, and another 71 victims in 1974.

A criminal will obtain weapons regardless of laws. Most owners of firearms in this country are law-abiding people. They are equally concerned about crime. Though it is a simplistic statement, let us remember that crime will not be stopped by the elimination of guns. In the many letters I have received from avid sportsmen, fish and game associations, gun collectors, and concerned citizens, the overriding point has been that concrete and positive steps must be taken to decrease gun crimes, but that it must be done in a manner that will protect society and at the same time really reverse the climbing gun crime rate.

Putting aside for a few moments the argument as to whether gun control will stop crime, I would like to expand upon the question my colleague from Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) raised in the House with regard to the administration of gun control. With over six million guns in this country, one begins to wonder if this government does indeed have a system that will not create an unmanageable bureaucracy. The question has to be raised concerning how much this will cost the Canadian taxpayers and, furthermore, how effective it will be. The government is consistent on this subject: it failed to give answers on its anti-inflation program, and will continue to do so on its gun control program.

Even with its proposed licensing of guns, the government is not being very specific. The suggestion is that a licence will only be issued if certain criteria are met, such as records and statements. No provisions are made, however, for gun safety, competency testing, and so on. These are necessary if the government really means what it says. Then, again, maybe this government will be satisfied with a half-hearted program.

The Trudeau government is straying away from the real problem, which is: How do we effectively reduce the commission of gun-related crimes? Canada's gun laws are

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already restrictive. So it is the crime rate with which we must concern ourselves. Most law-abiding people favour some sort of controls, because this will assist in the war against crime. But, again, there is more to the issue. I feel we have a moral responsibility to the Canadian public to make a concerted effort to hinder crime.

I, for one, am not in favour of a grab-bag of gun control proposals that will not effectively deal with crime. That is why I support the motion of my colleague, the member for Calgary North, in moving that Bill C-83 be not now read the second time but that the subject matter thereof be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. Like the hundreds of people who have taken the time to write me, I feel that now, more than ever, we must come up with a law enforcement package that will protect society from criminals. It is not fair to ask parliament to consider a piecemeal effort. Responsibility is the only approach we can take if Canadians are to be guaranteed a true sense of law and order.

Many positive proposals have been put forward by those who have an interest in guns and their relation to crime. I should like to discuss with this House some of those ideas. It is generally felt that regulation of the criminal use of firearms should be in a manner that does not infringe upon the rights of law-abiding citizens. This government has not given satisfactory answers on how it proposes to do that. Many people are calling for stricter enforcement of the law in respect of gun crimes. This government has not given assurances that this will be the case—and we want the answer. There are those who feel that safety courses should be conducted. This government has not given any satisfactory answers in this regard. The fact of the matter is that there are just too many unanswered questions. This parliament should be very careful in allowing such a piece of legislation to pass unaltered. This government owes the Canadian people some answers. There is no choice but that this bill should be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

Crime can no longer go uncontrolled in this country. Many people have been hurt by this government's persistent efforts to be lenient on the criminal element. When I first sought election to this House, I did so because of my personal belief that parliament is the one body that can set the direction of this country and that the tone it sets affects all of society. My belief has been strengthened; but I have also learned that a government can inflict negative effects upon society. That has been the record of this government on crime. In their brief on gun control, the Canadian chiefs of police said:

A fuller evaluation and assessment of many more points of view reveal a rationale that some "control" is desirable.

I believe most of us would accept that concept, but it must not be forgotten that controls alone will not be the solution. It is an impossible task to outline every comment and proposal for new gun legislation by every individual and interest group. However, a few shorter statements and suggestions on gun legislation are worth noting. The majority of gun control proponents favour mandatory terms for crimes involving firearms. The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police lists as one of its main proposals a mandatory jail term of three years for crimes involving firearms. Contrary to rifle associations, they have called