

Oral Questions

discussing anything. However I repeat that currently casinos come under provincial jurisdiction.

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[English]

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the police association announced it was withholding support for the minister's gun control measures until it has the assurance the criminalization of current lawful firearm owners, such as non-compliance with registration, is taken out of the Criminal Code.

In view of this, will he now consider addressing the two areas separately, one that imposes stricter penalties for the criminal use of a firearm and one that deals with the regulation and ownership of a firearm?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must slay the hon. member's beautiful hypothesis with a brutal fact. Yesterday the Canadian Police Association, representing some 35,000 frontline police officers, endorsed every element of the government's firearms package.

I shall be happy to share with the hon. member a copy of the resolution. It endorsed the government's prohibition on small calibre handguns. It endorsed the government's prohibition on assault weapons and it endorsed registration of all firearms.

In respect of the specific registration system proposed in Bill C-68, the Canadian Police Association endorses it subject only to two points, that the costs would not be taken from the operational budgets in place at present for the police, assurance of which I gave readily yesterday, and that some means be found by which first offences for non-registration could be dealt with on a regulatory rather than a criminal basis.

In respect of the second point, I expressed concern about achieving compliance. The response given by the police association was that perhaps instead of a criminal offence, if someone does not register, the first time around their gun should be confiscated. My response was that based on that approach perhaps we can do business.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have in my possession the stand the Canadian Police Association has issued. It is clear it has concerns in other areas such as the lack of enforcement regulations within the statute and the existing Criminal Code.

The police association has expressed concern about the inadequate enforcement of the present laws, as many of us are concerned. In Cornwall last year eight individuals were charged

with possession of a prohibited weapon, three semi-automatic weapons, breach of probation and possession of drugs. They were given a \$1,000 fine.

Given what the police association has said, given the case in Cornwall and other similar cases across Canada, what guarantees can the minister give us regarding the administration of justice? Will it provide for the adequate enforcement of the laws he is creating?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the course of the CPA's discussions this week on a whole range of justice issues, it identified areas where we can do better. There is no question there is room for improvement in every part of the criminal justice system.

It endorsed the firearms proposals by the government. The question had to do with enforcement mechanisms for criminal law. I assured the Canadian Police Association yesterday and throughout the week that we look forward to having its specific representations to the committee when it appears before it. If it has suggestions about improvements on the enforcement side, then working with the provinces, which are responsible for the enforcement of criminal law, we should be happy to see to it.

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[Translation]

MARINE TRANSPORT

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

As a result of an administrative error made by Transport Canada employees, who, in July, applied measures which were only to take effect in September, Canadian and foreign shipowners were overcharged more than \$1 million. Instead of refunding the money, the minister is looking at introducing retroactive legislation to legalize this illegal collection of fees from shipowners.

● (1140)

Will the minister admit that the bill that he is getting ready to introduce legalizing this over-billing is a retroactive measure which fully goes against the fundamental principles of a society based on the rule of law?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): No, not at all, Mr. Speaker. It all started with an administrative error, but shipowners knew exactly what they were supposed to pay. A standing joint committee acknowledged that an administrative error had been made. It is nothing new in such situations to correct the error through legislation, without there being any bad intentions on anybody's part.