

Private Members' Business

The member also made mention of a concern I have. We must wherever possible give police the advantage in dealing with domestic crises. These are problems in our society that we have to address. We have to address them quickly. We have to address them more efficiently. We want police to respond. We want them to respond quickly. We want them to respond with understanding. We want them to take meaningful action as a result of their investigations. We want a quick and effective follow-up.

• (1725)

If we are going to ask police to take more of a meaningful role in this and to take it more seriously than certainly some policemen have taken it in the past, then we are going to have to co-operate with them. If we can tell police through the central registry system that there may be firearms in that home, then I think we are giving some advantage to the police.

Certainly not all firearms are going to be registered. If we are dealing with someone who abuses his wife or his children, quite often that person is not going to register a firearm. They may neglect to do it and as such be in violation of the law when we have that registry system.

The fact is we should be able to have a registry system available to a police officer who is going to the scene of family violence. I think we have got to start. The job of the police has to be considered.

Also, we will know as we develop a central registry system how many firearms are there. I feel, as does the hon. member, that the number of hand-guns today has been kept to perhaps a lower level than ordinarily might have been if there was not a central registry system. I think that is good. That is responsible activity in our country. While a lot of people may not like to register their firearms and many will not and will absolutely refuse to register their firearms, most Canadians are law abiding and will register the firearms, so we will get participation and we will get co-operation.

We may never know even with a central registry system how many firearms are out there. As was the case with the ammunitions clip on a firearm, there is no identification quite often. These can be brought in. They can be sent in overnight from the United States. They do not have to be bought in Canada. There is no way of tracing it.

People say: "Why have it in the act that it is unlawful to have a clip that is over 10 for a hand-gun and five for a rifle?" The fact of the matter is if we have a law on that, it is going to do a lot more good than if we do not have a law. As well we cannot say that because we feel some people may not obey the law that is a reason for not having a law.

That is completely counterproductive. If we took that feeling in this House of Commons, we might as well all go home. There will always be some people who will not obey the law.

I commend the hon. member for bringing this legislation forward. I wish her well in this. I think it is a well thought out piece of legislation. I have not studied it in detail, but I have looked at it very quickly. I would like to see this legislation go to a legislative committee so we could study it more thoroughly.

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I can say on behalf of my colleague, the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, that we also certainly would support this bill.

While I am not an expert in this field, coming from urban Vancouver I can certainly support the need for much stronger gun control and that includes registration.

• (1730)

I recently went on a ride-around with the police in my riding late in the night. I can tell you that the incidence of violence, including the misuse of guns, was pretty scary, to say the least.

At the same time we all appreciate that for aboriginal people and for hunters, people living in the north, there is a different situation and certainly we need to be sensitive to the ways that they would see this applied.

I want to come back in a minute to some of the quotes from my colleague so that his position is on the record. I understand during the hearings into the gun control legislation, Bill C-17, that while nearly every advocate that came before the committee called for a national registration system, the minister herself was not convinced of this or was not persuaded of this. This is the minister, of course, who now is aspiring to become the leader of the Conservative Party and indeed the Prime Minister of Canada. It is a little scary to see that she would compromise on so important a matter.