

Government Orders

in technology since the hon. member made that statement in 1976.

Would he only deal with a doctor who used technology that was locked in time at 1976? I think not. I would suggest to him that with the change in information systems today, in 1995, 19 years after 1976, he might want to re-examine the statement made by the hon. member in 1976.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton has been belabouring the Americans again. I do not know what that has to do with our gun debate.

Since he has raised it, I would like to mention the situation where I live in western Canada on the prairie, very close to the U.S. border. We have great cultural similarities and great economic similarities with the people on the other side. We walk back and forth. As a matter of fact, we have more in common with each other than they have with drug dealers in New York or I have with silver spoon lawyers from Toronto.

Is it not interesting that over the last 15 years the homicide rate in the four northern states adjacent to the prairie provinces has been 16 per cent lower than on the Canadian side? It is 3.1 per hundred thousand per year on the Canadian side and 2.7 on the American side. Is that not interesting? Of all the states in the union, these are the four that have the most wide-open gun laws. You can carry anything short of a bazooka down there. But it is not a great big shooting gallery where they run around shooting one another. There is a cultural factor, which this government never takes into consideration, and it should.

• (1720)

I believe the hon. member has a few seconds to respond.

Mr. Gallaway: Mr. Speaker, I understand why the hon. member opposite thought I was only talking about the Americans. I was trying to draw a distinction. However, having regard to his seatmate, I understand why he could not hear me.

It is very easy to take a very localized area and say that the statistics are different. We are not talking about a registry system that applies in the city of Ottawa or in the city of Calgary; we are talking about a national system. It is very easy to distort reality with these numbers. For example, in the city of Washington, where they have very stringent gun controls, they have an extremely high murder rate but a much lower suicide rate. How would they explain that? It is because you cannot take a localized area—

An hon. member: They don't live long enough to contemplate suicide.

Mr. Grubel: Can you explain that?

Mr. Gallaway: I really appreciate the question and I would appreciate an attempt to answer it.

They have a localized area and they are trying to extend that to a national number. The member opposite knows that is false and misleading.

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-68 has one simple objective: to reduce death and injuries by firearms. Despite the views of a small and strident gun lobby, which I wish to emphasize does not speak for the majority of Canadians, this bill does not in any way support a hidden agenda on the part of this government to confiscate legally owned firearms or to sanction police state actions against the private dwelling houses of Canadians.

What this act does is limit in some measure access to firearms to people who are qualified, responsible, and knowledgeable about their proper use and storage. The numbers speak for themselves. Nearly 40 per cent of domestic homicides involve firearms. Most of the victims are women and children. Where firearms are used in homicides, 85 per cent were committed with long guns, the vast majority being legally owned.

The risk of death from a firearm discharge in Canada is almost equal to the risk of death from a motor vehicle crash: 2.37 deaths per 10,000 firearms possessed, versus 2.4 per 10,000 registered motor vehicles in 1990.

The opposition to this bill has been intense. They say that guns do not kill, people do. Simply put, people with guns kill, and they do so with frightening efficiency. Let us look at the suicide stats. Suicide attempts involving guns have a 7 per cent survival rate. Where guns are not involved the survival rate rises to 65 per cent.

The opponents of gun control say that if someone really wants to commit suicide they will find a way. However, experts on suicide prevention appearing before the committee testified to the contrary. Suicide is an impulsive act. Even a short delay will often give the person the chance to reconsider, and they often do. Therefore, limiting or delaying access to firearms can and will save lives.

It will come as no surprise that those areas of Canada where firearm ownership is highest also displayed the highest rates of firearm death and injury. Remarkably, these are the same groups that came before committee seeking an exemption from this bill, saying that their traditional way of life was threatened. But I note that the member for Nunatsiag said that this bill will not result in one less caribou death.

It has been argued that firearm homicide is strictly a big city phenomenon. In Canada this is simply not true. For instance, a study by the Northeastern Ontario Trauma Centre found higher rates of gun homicides in rural northern Ontario than throughout Ontario as a whole.