

Government Orders

The police officers in Saskatchewan have demonstrated that they have absolutely no faith in Bill C-68 and its ability to affect crime rates.

As time goes on we will see the police forces in some of the other provinces come forward with the same conclusion.

We have had a handgun registry in this country for about 60 years. It was revamped in 1977 by Bill C-51, which was introduced again by a Liberal government to, as they say—and this is wonderful—enhance public safety. This sort of sounds familiar. We have heard this same phrase from this government and the Minister of Justice himself over the last several weeks. It is to “enhance public safety”. Since 1977, studies by Sproule and Kennett, Robert Mundt, and Mauser and Holmes all showed that the changes enacted in 1977 had no effect on firearms homicide rates in Canada.

That is what we call substantive evidence, not the rhetoric and the words that the Liberals use with nothing to back them up—statistics.

• (1640)

It is very clear that while Bill C-68 does contain some measures to deal more harshly with criminals and people who commit firearms offences, which we can support, we would have liked to have seen the government and the minister introduce a whole lot stiffer penalties than what they have done. While it contains some legislation that is good and that we can support, I challenge the part that deals with firearms registration.

I have been on talk show after talk show with anti-gun advocates. When I gave them the specific opportunity to bring forward substantive evidence that gun registration would cut crime, not one single time were they able to give a substantive piece of evidence. The most common answer was: “Well, we register cars; what is wrong with registering guns?” That is the standard answer from these people and this government here.

Let us go with that. Mr. Speaker, you tell me and any member over here whether the registration of automobiles cuts down on stolen cars, on traffic accidents or on the carnage that is on our highway. How does car registration cut down on people who steal cars and commit crimes with cars? Not one single bit.

I ask this government and any member over there to show me clearly, please, how they substantiate their claim that universal registration is going to in fact cut crime. I give that challenge to them and so do millions of firearms owners in this country who can see no justification for universal firearms registration.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Dear colleagues, it is my duty to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the

time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Brant—justice; the hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake—the environment.

[English]

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the second reading debate on Bill C-68 today.

I have a distinct advantage over many of the members of this House because I am a member of the justice committee. As a member of the justice committee, when this bill is referred to the justice committee I will have many days and hours, many opportunities, to ask witnesses very pointed questions. I will have an opportunity not only to examine witnesses but to cross-examine witnesses and inquire about certain facts that my friends in the Reform Party, for example, have suggested are not facts and to ask certain questions that they want to ask.

My intervention today will not be to answer or attempt to answer the questions that my friends in the Reform Party have brought up, generally speaking. My purpose in standing today and speaking is to examine and to try to help Canadians understand precisely what it is that is going to happen today. What I object to, quite frankly, is the misinformation that my friends in the Reform Party are attempting to spread across Canada with respect to what would happen if we were to support their motion today.

What I want to talk about is the actual legalities of what would occur if one were to support the Reform Party motion, and then let us let Canadians decide what the Reform Party has been saying and let us let them decide whether it is in fact what would occur.

We are being asked to consider the government's motion. It is a very simple motion. We may not agree with the bill or the principles, but the motion is very simple. It states “that the bill be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs”. The government is simply saying, all right, let us refer this to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs so that they can hear witnesses and hear all of these people who wish to either support or object to the bill.

My friends in the Reform Party have put forward a very specific amendment. They are trying to tell people that their amendment splits the bill. That is not the case. The motion is very specific. All words after the word “that” are to be removed. Remember that the original motion says that the bill be read a second time and referred to committee. Reform members want that passage to be removed. What do they want to substitute it with? Do they want to substitute a motion that says that the bill be split into two separate sections? No. This is what they want to do: