

distract attention from capital punishment. I would like to deny that statement in the strongest possible terms. I must remind the House that firearms control has been a long-standing concern of mine. On two occasions as a backbencher I sought to give Canadians more control over firearms misuse. As Solicitor General, I assembled a working group to study the area and to report to me. It is their work that forms the basis for the measures proposed here. Further, as Solicitor General I called the first conference of firearms registrars and officials held in Canada to discuss the restricted weapons system and general control. It gives me considerable satisfaction to see before the House this package of measures to control firearms misuse within the context of the government's over-all concern with peace and security.

I could with some enthusiasm continue to point out the intention and strengths of the measures proposed here. But I am confident they will become abundantly clear as the bill is debated and reviewed by committee. Some people have criticized the government's proposed firearms control measures as the first step in the eventual confiscation of all firearms in Canada. Others have criticized the government for not offering stronger measures. The government, of course, is attempting neither to lay the groundwork for consideration of weapons, nor to appease those who oppose all gun controls. Instead, these proposals are designed to offer a workable, moderate, feasible approach to the serious problem presented by those who misuse firearms in Canada.

I believe the measures proposed in the bill we are now considering do offer a reasonable and reasoned approach, and I commend them to the House. If there are suggestions and ideas to improve that approach, then committee consideration of the bill is obviously the forum in which to present and study them. The Minister of Justice and I have made it clear that we welcome reasonable amendments in committee.

I would now like to turn to consideration of the proposals—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Is the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) rising on a point of order?

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I was wondering whether the minister would permit a question before leaving gun control. In the Yukon, and I believe also in the Northwest Territories, the police, who have responsibility for granting permits to trappers, prospectors and persons engaged in exploration work in the wilderness, have received instructions not to issue any more permits to anyone. I just want to confirm whether or not that is the case. If that instruction has gone out from Ottawa, in order to afford guns to people who require to use hand-guns in the field for protection from grizzly bears and the like, could the instruction be revoked so far as the two northern territories are concerned?

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, I understand the registrar for the Yukon has issued a directive not to give permits to prospectors who apply for a hand-gun permit. It seems that up until recently the registrar of the Yukon did grant permits for the use of hand-guns by prospectors for self-protection, whereas in the Northwest Territories they did

not. I am led to believe that the two registrars got together and felt they should have one policy. I recently received a number of letters from prospectors in the north, and the question is under review at the present time.

Mr. Nielsen: The instruction came from Ottawa.

Mr. Allmand: It did not come from me. It has been brought to my attention, and it is under review. I cannot tell the hon. member what the outcome of the review will be, but I have had representations from prospectors in the Yukon. I said I would now like—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order. The hon. member for Victoria-Haliburton (Mr. Scott) wishes to ask a question.

Mr. Scott: Yes, Mr. Speaker, if I may. I am not in total support of Americans bringing guns into Canada, Mr. Speaker, but this does represent a large segment of the tourist industry and each province, especially the province of Ontario, earns millions of dollars from American hunters coming into Canada. What provisions have been made to allow Americans to bring guns into Canada for sporting reasons?

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, the bill provides for temporary permits for sportsmen coming into Canada to hunt, just as hunters coming into Canada get temporary hunting licences in the different provinces. There are different rules in each province. I forget the actual section of the bill, but provision is made for a temporary firearms licence for these people. We can discuss this at greater length in committee, but that is provided for.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, I should now like to discuss the proposals affecting the corrections system, namely, the proposals dealing with the custody and release of inmates. As the Minister of Justice said in his speech, the Ministry of the Solicitor General has already undertaken a series of administrative changes aimed at improving the screening process for release decisions. The peace and security program, too, includes a number of changes affecting the custody and release of inmates. These changes are being proposed after careful consideration of the Ouimet report, the Senate report under Senator Goldenberg and the Hugessen report, the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission and extensive consultation with the provinces.

A number of the legislative proposals are intended to improve the capacity of the penitentiary authorities to provide increased security within penitentiaries through better control of inmates. The maximum penalty for escape or attempted escape from a penitentiary has been increased from five years to ten years. This change is being introduced to further improve the penitentiary service record in so far as escapes are concerned. Since 1972, when we started an improved program of security in our penitentiaries—there were 187 escapes in that year—we have, through these improved measures, reduced the number of escapes to 115 in 1973, 50 in 1974 and 43 in 1975, a total reduction in that period of time of more than 75 per cent.