

tell Hon. Members that Elwood Epp does not get robbed all that much because some people have seen those dogs behind the store and know just what sort of chance they would have. The fish and game club and others speak to a common sense approach by the authorities and to the involvement of those in the club with regard to the determination of regulations.

● (1820)

I have further correspondence from the Orillia Gun Club, a group established in 1929 by a group of people from my area, some 180 family members, who point out that they have a proud record of purpose, safety, accomplishment and dedication to providing recreational shooting for the people of Simcoe County. When they looked at the previous legislation put forward by my colleague, they said, and I quote:

—we feel it should be scrapped in its entirety and replaced by legislation which will seek to reduce the “criminal use” of firearms through a legal process of laws that deter those that act in a criminal manner while using a firearm in that act, and will cause the “irresponsible use” of firearms to be approached through FAC screening and as importantly through the continuance of safety training programs which we wholly endorse.

I feel I must say once again to the House, Mr. Speaker, that this is where the sports people are coming from when we talk about gun control. They want safe, responsible use of firearms. That is where their emphasis is. They go on to point out that they will accept any constructive changes brought about in a democratic manner. They speak to the question of input from law enforcement agencies, sportsmen’s groups, collectors and conservation authorities. Their goal, as stated in this correspondence, would be to see that the criminal and careless use of firearms is reduced, while protecting the interests of the firearms enthusiasts.

As their Member of Parliament, I support the submissions made to me by the Orillia Fish and Game Conservation Club and the Orillia Gun Club Inc. I am pleased to be able to put their position on the record of the House of Commons in speaking to the legislation put forward by my colleague.

I believe what the Hon. Member is trying to do is to make every individual who has owned a firearm prior to 1979, and who has not found it necessary to acquire a firearms acquisition certificate, to submit themselves to a screening by the police. These are people who have never had to submit to this type of screening before. They are innocent. They have never run into any problems with the law through their conduct with firearms in terms of sport hunting. Suddenly they have to trot down to the police station to be screened by the police, so that my colleague can determine whether or not their possession of the firearm for the previous five years constituted a hazard to their safety or to the safety of others. There is no mention made of what sort of examination will be conducted. There is no mention of what sort of protection the ordinary citizens are going to have from harrassment on other issues. I believe the Bill is sadly lacking in that kind of common sense.

Second, anyone who possesses ammunition—presumably they must have a gun as well—would also have to pass this screening by a hoard of bureaucrats who are going to determine whether or not these people who have always obeyed the

law are capable of not obeying the law in the future. Finally, anyone who has a firearm or ammunition in a motor vehicle would require a firearms possession certificate.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the present legislation is drafted to deny individuals who wish to acquire a firearm the right to do so if there is reasonable cause to believe that for the safety of the public they should not have one. The legislation is intended to prevent convicted criminals who have used violence against another person, or who have used firearms in the commission of their crimes, and individuals who have been treated for mental disorders associated with violent behaviour or who have attempted or threatened violence against others—all within a previous five-year period—from legally acquiring firearms. I see a great deal of sense in that but I do not see any sense in individuals who have obeyed the law during their ownership of firearms, and who have acted in a safe manner whenever they used firearms, to be brought down to a police station and made to submit to this kind of inquisition.

I could continue, Mr. Speaker, but I see that my colleague, the Hon. Member for Nipissing (Mr. Mantha) would like to make a few comments. I know that his constituents, like mine, are all law-abiding people and they want their Member of Parliament to have an opportunity to address this important matter.

Mr. Moe Mantha (Nipissing): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for relinquishing his time to allow me to speak for a few moments.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak on Bill C-205 on gun control. This legislation raises issues of concern not only to my constituency but to millions of Canadians throughout the country because the issue of gun control touches on the very nature of our individual liberties in a free and democratic society. It is also a matter which touches on the issue of public safety and, therefore, is of interest to all Canadians. These are the realities which help to explain why the very subject of gun control is controversial and continues to inspire sharply divided opinion.

The use of firearms in sports, recreation and as a means of livelihood has been a part of our Canadian heritage for well over four centuries and that tradition continues today. Gun control also has a long history in Canada since its inception in the earliest days of Confederation. It has been an important aspect of Canadian and social policy. It is not the concept of gun control, however, which is at issue here. Measures which deal with the criminal and irresponsible use of firearms deserve our support. I do believe, however, that Government policy must strive for a reasonable balance between the need for public safety and the legitimate interests of firearms users and owners.

To achieve that balance it is important that we consider all of those affected before this House brings about any change in gun control legislation. It is in the consideration of millions of Canadians who would be directly and adversely affected by Bill C-205 that I must speak out against its main thrust.