

As I said, the momentum for this bill came as a result of the massacre on December 6, 1989, at the University of Montreal. It appeared that we were going to get some legislation, but now we are not going to get any legislation. We are going to have a study. We will not oppose the study, but I must express my extreme disappointment and my extreme regret. I personally know some of the parents whose daughters were killed in that incident and, I will tell you, they are not going to take this lightly. They are going to consider it a betrayal by the government in carrying out what it had promised to do. This is not radical legislation that the government has presented. It is an improvement on what we have now, but it is not a radical departure.

By the way, on this side we agree that the subject matter of the bill should be studied in committee, but we think it should have been done after a vote on second reading. Once the bill was in committee, then, of course, we would hear witnesses. Perhaps the bill could be modified in some way and made better through amendment in committee, and maybe modified in other respects where certain people had concerns. The bill might be improved in the directions of both public safety and bureaucratic red tape, and so on, about which many hunters and sports shooters are concerned about. The bill could have been improved by a good study in committee after second reading. But what is going to happen is that we are just going to get the study and, likely, nothing at all. I hope that is not the case, but I have great fear that that is what we are going to get.

What is the paranoia suffered by the various gun lobbies in respect of gun controls? We have had gun control in the country since 1892 and it has been continually improved upon over the years. The loopholes in the legislation have been closed. That is what we are attempting to do again, but there is a paranoia suffered by some people. They are in the minority because, every time there is a Gallup poll on the subject, the overwhelming majority of Canadians wants the strict control of the acquisition and use of guns. Even in the prairie provinces, the majority wants stricter controls on guns. But, for one reason or another, the minority, the lobbies, are very active. With their flood of letters, they have upset certain members of Parliament who get flaky and back off from what should be good legislation.

Government Orders

What is this paranoia? Nobody, in any political party that I know of, is suggesting that we should ban all rifles, shotguns, and hunting weapons. We have three classes of weapons in this country. We have prohibited weapons. These are weapons that are banned, outright, such as machine-guns and fully automatic weapons permitted to the police and the Armed Forces, but not to ordinary citizens, and sawed-off shotguns. They are prohibited weapons which cannot be obtained by anybody. I think, everybody agrees with that.

There are restricted weapons which are mainly handguns and revolvers. They are only permitted to individuals if they can show cause, in accordance with the legislation. For example, in the case of a private detective or if there has been an attack on a family, a handgun can be applied for and the police have the discretion in giving the permit necessary for a restricted weapon.

All the others, which I would call regulated, are in the third category. Regulated weapons are the customary long guns, rifles, and shotguns. Until 1978, there was no control over those weapons whatsoever. One could walk into any sporting goods or hardware store and buy a rifle or shotgun, without any screening whatsoever. However, in Canada we found that too many murders were taking place with these long guns. In 1978, we said that, in order to buy a long gun, a shotgun or a rifle, one had to get a firearms acquisition certificate. There was to be a screening process in which one was checked for a criminal record, mental stability, any record of violence in the community, and so on. When there was indication that the individual was not responsible, then the police had the right to refuse the firearms acquisition certificate.

Nobody is suggesting that we should ban, outright, ordinary rifles and shotguns which are used for hunting and sporting purposes. Why should Canadians object to a control over a weapon which is manufactured and designed to kill? I am not talking about pop guns, guns which shoot plastic or rubber bullets, or guns which fire tear-gas. I am talking about rifles and shotguns that are manufactured to kill either animals or individuals. Why is there an objection to having at least the same control over these manufactured objects that we have on automobiles? An automobile is manufactured for transportation but, because it proceeds at great speeds, we have the licensing and the testing of people who want to drive. Nobody can just buy an automobile and drive, without taking a test, passing it, and getting a driver's licence. If