

*Government Orders*

apprehend these people, we make an arrest, we get them into court and they get off with a slap on the wrist”.

Their message to me was to get tough with the people who are misusing and abusing firearms rather than legislate a useless registration system.

I hope this government's anti-smuggling legislation works better than its anti-cigarette campaign. I understand cigarette use has increased dramatically since this government lowered the taxes a year ago. I hope the plan is not to lower the taxes on guns to combat smuggling.

Bill C-68 has some tough laws on trafficking. Under sections 99 and 100 of part III of the Criminal Code a weapons trafficker will get up to 10 years. I also notice that tucked away in section 110(v) of the Firearms Act the governor in council can pass regulations “respecting the manner in which any provision of this act or the regulation applies to any of the aboriginal peoples of Canada and adapting any such provision for the purposes of that application”.

The question has been asked and will repeatedly be asked whether this legislation will apply equally to all Canadians. The minister's reply throws more confusion when he says yes, but with flexibility toward the aboriginal people. What does this mean? Canadians need to know.

The justice minister maintains that the government is not effectively destroying the value of the prohibited handguns because Bill C-68 creates a class of gun owners they can trade with. This class is defined as any current gun owner who legally owned one of the newly prohibited guns on or before Tuesday, February 14. Considering that date I wonder if Bill C-68 is not just a Valentine's present by the minister to Wendy Cukler of the Coalition for Gun Control.

• (1635)

Does that really protect their investment in these guns? Over time the class of owners will dwindle through attrition. Fewer and fewer people will be allowed to buy these guns and eventually there would be only one avid collector in possession of half a million guns. When he or she dies all those guns will be confiscated by the crown. Will they get fair compensation for those firearms if he or she tries to sell them before they die? There will only be a few collectors allowed to buy them. Do not tell me that fair compensation will be offered. Do not tell me or the country that their market will be stable.

Last year a young Edmonton mother, Barb Danelesko, was savagely murdered in a home invasion. Do you think she could have convinced a firearms officer that she needed to protect herself or her children? Recently one young offender found guilty for that crime was handed a three-year sentence.

Under Bill C-68, if Mrs. Danelesko had had an unregistered firearm at her disposal for her defence and had survived, she would have had to face up to 10 years for non-compliance. Where is the balance? Where is the justice?

Proven criminals receive fewer years than this minister wants to give responsible hunters who have done nothing wrong but failed to register their shotgun.

Many people, especially those living in cities, do not believe the ability to protect your home and family is a legitimate reason to own a gun. The justice minister certainly does not believe it.

Less than a year ago he said he came to Ottawa with the firm belief that the only people in this country who should have guns are police officers and soldiers. This is a sobering thought for millions of responsible gun owners in Canada. With the introduction of Bill C-68 he is one step closer to fulfilling his goal.

He also said he did not want Canadians to think they needed to protect themselves. I have news for him. With our overburdened police forces and court system, most Canadians already know they need to protect themselves.

Guns are a necessary part of life for many people in northern B.C. Farmers need them for predator control. Trappers and guides use them every day in their work. Hunters use them to help stock their freezers. Many of us also believe that we should be able to use guns for personal protection, to defend our homes, our families and our property.

The criminals laugh while the rest of us become their victims and have our civil liberties taken away. This is how the Liberal government deals with gun related violence. People need to be able to defend themselves in situations in which the police, as much as they would like to, cannot.

In Edmonton a man shot at intruders in his yard and he is the one facing charges. The papers called the thwarted robber the victim. If we are to have true justice the rights of the innocent defending their homes must supersede the rights of the guilty who are trying to rob them.

Today the criminals are called the victims and society apologizes for their behaviour. Meanwhile responsible citizens have more of their rights infringed upon because the police and the courts cannot keep up.

This government is trying to convince Canadians that gun control is the same thing as crime control. Maybe it is easier to go after law-abiding gun owners than after hardened criminals. I do not believe it is going to solve the crime problem and I do not think most Canadians do either.

I do recognize, however, that there are positive aspects to this legislation. If the hon. members opposite would listen, I will list the positive aspects.