

Government Orders

into something that our technicians are telling us will not work and will certainly cost a lot more than \$85 million to establish.

I ask the minister if he would consider these proposals. This kind of information is going to be laid, lock, stock and barrel, before the standing committee, through witness after witness we will bring forward, from either the RCMP or the city police forces from across this country which have to deal with the problem. They are now faced with a situation in which they have to give a legal opinion in court instead of a technical opinion. I will give the House an example.

If the minister goes forward and creates an offence for a person in possession of a handgun based upon its calibre, such as the .32 and the .25, that will create a serious problem. The reason for that is simple. Although the offence, the charge, the information in court will indicate that the individual is in violation of a section by virtue of the fact that they are in possession of a .32 calibre, all the defence counsel has to do is ask the technical witness about the calibre of the handgun?

Although marked on its side that it is a .32 calibre, the definition of calibre, according to these technicians, is not what is marked on the side, but by the size of the projectile it fires. The .32 calibre, according to them, fires a .30 calibre projectile.

I asked them what they would say on the witness stand when asked about the calibre. They said they would simply tell the court that it is designed as a .32, its markings are that of a .32, but it fires a .30 calibre projectile and they would let the judge decide. If they had respond yes or no to whether the firearm is .32 calibre, they said they would not respond. I asked them if they have ever considered a career in politics.

My point is that there are a host of technical difficulties. When it comes to placing the identifying features from a firearm on to a registration card that the police will be able to identify without question, if they come across an individual with a firearm in the back seat of a car or in the trunk of a car for example, they are not going to be able to positively identify that firearm.

All we have to do is look at the Terence Wade report in which he outlined the problems within the present handgun registration system. Approximately 30 per cent of the information contained in that system is simply useless.

I understand from some of the legal opinions I am hearing that soon the challenges in court will render the handgun registration system invalid within a court of law because it cannot be relied upon.

• (1830)

There are so many different types of firearms that we are going to have an extreme degree of difficulty registering them to the point at which the registration card issued can identify one

specific firearm out of the 7 million to 20 million that exist in Canada today.

I point out difficulties that the registration system will have. It flies in the face of what the justice minister has said in terms of simplicity.

If it is going to be as simple as the justice minister has indicated, then it is not going to be worth the powder to blow it in the hands of the police officers as an enforcement tool.

Let us take a look at this. Let us go forward with the portion directed at the criminal use of firearms. Let us take a second look at the other part.

The Deputy Speaker: According to the rules there is a six-minute extension of the debate because of the statement made earlier.

Mr. Bernie Collins (Souris—Moose Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having served on the committee and being a member of the wildlife federation and coming from a rural riding of Saskatchewan, I am very concerned with the bill in its present form.

I support the minister with regard to the criminal element, the four-year mandatory sentence for the commission of a crime with a firearm. The use of a fake firearm in the commission of a crime and a one-year mandatory sentence I support wholeheartedly. Those actions that would take into consideration smuggling and other offences involving guns and other illegal activities I support wholeheartedly.

However, I have some strong reservations with regard to registration. If I am going to ask the citizens of Souris—Moose Mountain or any other area to spend \$85 million, we have to consider what we are going to do for that cost.

I am prepared to register. I have owned guns all my life. I am a wildlife member and a firearms safety instructor. I was never impressed with the FAC formed some years ago. Now we have a four-page document. The government might as well have made it 30 pages and we could have had a light history of each of us as we own handguns.

In Saskatchewan most of the people who own handguns handle them safely, especially those who are members of handgun clubs. They have to adhere to all the rules and regulations.

As wildlife members we have to make sure that under Bill C-17 we store our guns and ammunition properly. We do have a responsibility to one another. As a hunter, in order for me to go on any other person's land I have to respect it. That is a privilege, not a right.

Many of us think it is a right and not very many farmers post their land because they expect that each of us going on that land does respect each other's property.