

Gun Control

207, which, as you know, is an Act to amend the Criminal Code with respect to gun-control laws and legislation.

The Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) has pointed out that I have had a great interest in this area of the law, along with other areas of the criminal justice system, since I came here as a Member of Parliament some three years ago. I did not come lacking in interest in this area, I came bringing my interest in this area of the criminal justice system with me when I came to Ottawa.

● (1750)

I recognize as you do, Sir, and as has been outlined in the House this afternoon, that this is a very controversial area in which there is a wide divergence of opinion as to just what should be done with respect to gun control. We have heard this afternoon, and I have heard in the past on many occasions, that in fact rather than tightening gun-control laws we should be loosening them up or, at the very minimum, we should leave them alone.

Mr. Lesick: Hear, hear!

Mr. Redway: The Hon. Member for Edmonton East (Mr. Lesick) has said, "Hear, hear!". Of course, during his own remarks he said that in all his long career in using and having guns in his family none of them have ever lost their lives as a result of the use of firearms. Thank goodness that that has been the case. We would be devastated to learn that the Hon. Member or any member of his family had lost their lives through the use of guns. I am sure that, very fortunately, the Hon. Member has never had the opportunity to walk down the street during a bank robbery or the hold-up of a gas bar. There are people who have had other experiences in this respect, particularly police officers whom we all call upon to aid and to assist us when we are faced with dangerous situations such as people carrying and using firearms in an improper fashion.

As I indicated, I have listened carefully to this debate. I have listened to such debates many times in the past. There are those who feel that we should tighten up gun-control legislation. There are those who feel that we should leave it alone. There are those who feel that we should loosen it up. Surely, we can come up with some laws that deal with all of the concerns and all of the situations that have been pointed out this afternoon, concerns which are pointed out on the many occasions when this subject is raised.

There are certainly legitimate concerns on the part of hunters and target-shooters. That is something which we all understand. However, at the same time there are other legitimate problems that exist with the use of firearms. We have to have some gun-control legislation to deal with those problems. I think perhaps the most pressing of these at the present time are the ones that have been pointed out by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. My friend, the Hon. Member for Burnaby, referred to the resolution dealing with firearms that was passed one year ago in August of 1986 by the eighty-first annual conference of the Canadian Association

of Chiefs of Police. At that time the chiefs of police were calling upon the Solicitor General of Canada to address their concerns in conjunction with his provincial counterparts and to take the steps necessary to end the increase in available weapons, as well as to review the present gun-control laws.

In their resolution they pointed out a number of situations with which they are concerned. One concern in particular, that which causes the greatest concern to them—I know it does to the Chief of Police in my own city of metropolitan Toronto—is expressed in the following resolution:

WHEREAS there is presently a worldwide surplus of automatic and semi-automatic weapons primarily designed for purposes of warfare now finding their way into the Canadian market place—

Obviously, that is the area of greatest concern to the police. What police officer, chief of police or otherwise, would want to see any one of his compatriots or colleagues on the police force face in a show-down someone armed with an automatic or a semi-automatic machine gun when that police officer had in response to defend him or herself a revolver in order to serve and protect the public as they are sworn to do? The growing number and the world-wide surplus of automatic and semi-automatic weapons is an area that really has to be addressed, and addressed seriously by the Government.

In order to try to express my own concerns with this situation, as you will recall, Mr. Speaker, I have raised questions in the House on two occasions dealing with gun control. The first occasion was about a year and a half ago. It came about immediately after the Boyarski case in Metropolitan Toronto in which guns were used, guns that had been used which did not comply with the present gun-control legislation. At that time the Solicitor General, who was then the law officer in charge of this legislation, indicated that there would be some changes made to our gun-control laws, and made very promptly. That was about a year and a half ago.

Subsequently, one year ago, I raised the issue again in a question to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn) who had then assumed the responsibilities for gun-control legislation. At that time the Minister indicated that there would be prompt action in this regard. Now, almost two years have passed since the Government indicated that we would be seeing something in the way of new gun-control legislation, and we have not seen anything of the sort. I know it is disturbing to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.

Although hunters and target-shooters are content with what we have now, I believe that it is disturbing to the average Canadian. The average Canadian now lives in an urban area and is faced with these potential dangers, not the danger of someone hunting ducks or deer or of someone shooting a clay pigeon or shooting at targets on a range, but with the problems of people running around the streets with weapons that may very well cause problems, and very serious ones.

It is long overdue that the Government start to address this problem and to introduce some legislation to deal with it. I