

Government Orders

spouse in jail for shooting the other spouse will somehow deter others from the same behaviour.

If we take the punishment versus prevention logic and follow it through to its conclusion, surely punishment would be a sufficient deterrent to allow banks to transport money without armoured cars. Surely the threat of a sentence for holding up a bank employee transporting cash would be sufficient to prevent such a criminal act and banks could cut the cost of doing business by not spending money on such preventive safety measures as armoured cars.

We know there are still robberies of armoured cars. The fact that banks have taken reasonable measures to prevent acts that are reasonably foreseeable is accepted by society as the prudent course of action.

Similarly we have in the country workplace safety laws that require certain steps to be taken to minimize accidents in the workplace. Such laws are accepted even though there is a cost in implementing safety devices and inspection procedures because certain tragedies are preventable, although by no means can such legislation eliminate unfortunate accidents and occurrences.

If the same burden of proof were placed on the implementation of workplace safety laws or seatbelt laws such as was suggested by members across the way, and if the same quantitative mathematical proof were applied to the laws before passage, obviously none of the statutory provisions would ever exist. We would live in a country without workplace safety laws.

I commend to all opponents of the bill who would prefer to talk rather than listen the testimony of public health experts who appeared before the committee. They recognized that laws such as this one create a change not only in the flow of guns, the possession of guns and the usage of guns, but more important in the attitudes of society toward guns.

Many witnesses who appeared before the committee stated the tired old maxim that we have heard many times: people kill, guns do not. Such simple statements deny the fact that guns are inherently dangerous objects and that in possessing these weapons certain obligations should be imposed.

Is it unreasonable to know who owns the weapons or where they are moving in society? Is it in some way an imposition on someone's inherent right to have some central registry system when the same exists for dogs, cars, houses and securities?

Mr. Stinson: It stops the dogs that bite and the drunks who drive.

Mr. Gallaway: Notwithstanding all the talk across the way, is it reasonable to conclude from the evidence of the police, public health experts, suicide prevention groups and public

safety experts that the cornerstone of the bill, the registry system, will cut the rate of crime and suicides in Canada? The unequivocal response is yes, I must acknowledge that there were many witnesses who sincerely denied this to be the case. There are those who cling to the beliefs of the business administrator turned criminologist. Perhaps these people will turn to their accountant the next time they have a medical problem.

• (1715)

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. Questions or comments, the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if the government had not chosen to enact time allocation I am sure all of us would have enjoyed hearing the remainder of the hon. member's speech on this issue. He can thank his own party for cutting him off in that sense.

We are talking about effectiveness of this impending legislation. Every time we try to raise concerns about it in this House we are accused of trafficking in fiction. The government says that the people of Canada have to trust it. It will draft these regulations. We have not seen what they are yet. We have to trust the government that once it gets the regulations in place it will effectively address the issues.

I want to briefly read into the record the following:

Registration pertains to things—guns in this case—not people. It records the description, serial number and ownership of each item or weapon. For extremely lethal and easily hidden weapons such as handguns—which in Canada are restricted and of which there are relatively few—it is a workable and relatively effective system that screens owners and weapons alike and inhibits casual purchase. However, for the ten million long guns in Canada I believe that a registration scheme would be unworkable and impractical in comparison with its potential benefits.

This quote was from the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, *Hansard*, Commons debates, page 12627, April 8, 1976, the hon. member who currently sits as the chairman of the Standing Committee on Justice. This is the very hypocrisy Canadians are concerned about, where members seem to change their opinion. They are concerned that this legislation will be simply one more step in the ongoing erosion of the rights of law-abiding firearms owners. I would like to hear the hon. members address that concern from Canadians.

Mr. Gallaway: Mr. Speaker, it is perhaps a hallmark of the member opposite that he is locked in time and that new evidence will not persuade him to change his mind. His mind is made up and that is the way it is going to be.

The member would like to ask the question and continue to talk. I know that the hon. member on occasion appeared at committee. I once again commend to him the evidence of the public health experts. I would also commend to him the change