

Government Orders

not understood it already. This is going to be a cost factor where those who register, starting in January of 1996, will not pay anything for their possession certificate initially and the cost will increase in a moderate fashion throughout the five-year period. When the five-year renewal period comes around, there will be a cost of approximately \$60 per person for the renewal.

The registration cost will not be \$100 per firearm, as has been stated by many members in the House. It will be \$10 per firearm, and for that \$10 the person will be able to register 10 firearms. That is a significant difference from what we have been told by members opposite.

I also want to say that this bill will fight crime. If members opposite do not know that now, they should make a point of looking at the statistics to realize that.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I can just imagine all the criminals in Canada waiting to run down to the nearest registration office to say, "I own this gun. Put my name on that list, by golly, because I want to get on that computer." They just cannot wait for that.

Unfortunately, this is a tragic thought, but I can also imagine how much better future victims of firearms crimes are going to feel when an offence is committed against them with a registered firearm. I say that facetiously, but still very seriously.

The motion put forward by my hon. colleague from Yorkton—Melville will split Bill C-68 into two portions. I believe it is imperative to be able to discuss separately, in a substantial fashion, the so-called merits of universal registration, as the Liberals would like to have Canadians believe that there actually is some merit to it, and also to discuss the improvements to the Criminal Code that would deal with people who commit firearms offences. It is important that this bill be split. Canadian people must have a chance to have input on both sides of the bill. To create a bill that deals with these two issues in one simply leaves the Canadian people and this House with no opportunity to stop the bad side of the bill and, at the same time, vote for some of the good points.

I believe there are members in the Liberal Party who would, if given the opportunity, instantly vote against universal registration and at the same time instantly support stricter penalties and tougher laws for people who commit firearms offences. We enthusiastically implore the Liberal Party to support the splitting of Bill C-68.

I believe members should be concerned when changes to the Criminal Code are tied to other measures that seek to impose on the right of law-abiding Canadians to own and enjoy property. This imposition is exactly what Bill C-68, when taken in its entirety, seeks to accomplish: to impose red tape, more regulation and more penalties on law-abiding firearms owners in this

country. At the same time, the bill does little to impose stricter penalties, harsher penalties, rightful penalties on the people who commit firearms offences. We should be looking at deterring firearms crime while not imposing on the rights of law-abiding firearms owners.

• (1635)

The motion of the member for Yorkton—Melville to split the bill is in accordance with a policy that the Canadian people want. If this bill was split, this party can support enthusiastically the part that deals with imposing stricter penalties on firearms offences, while at the same time enthusiastically opposing it, along with a lot of Liberal backbenchers who would love to do it. Unfortunately, because of party discipline in the Liberal party, they are not going to be able to oppose the registration.

The Minister of Justice, the Liberal members, with all their rhetoric and all their talk about this new bill, Bill C-68, have offered not one shred of substantive proof that universal registration will prevent firearms crime in Canada. Not one single shred have any of these Liberal members offered of proof that firearms registration is going to cut crime in this country.

The onus is on the Minister of Justice and this government to demonstrate clearly to law-abiding citizens affected by these new registration laws that they will indeed produce a desirable effect. That is what good legislation should be all about. This bill cannot demonstrate that in any way; therefore, it cannot be considered good legislation.

The onus was placed on the Minister of Justice to clearly demonstrate how registration is going to cut crime. He has not done it. The minister continues to state that registration will improve public safety. Again, he has not presented one single shred of evidence that it is going to do exactly that.

He says the association of police chiefs support him. I may get a few of these chiefs mad at me, but I would like to remind this House that the association of police chiefs has received about \$150,000 in grants for their organization from this government. One can conjure up all sorts of thoughts of why there is this great support for Bill C-68 and the Minister of Justice.

However, the facts simply do not support his claim. In New Zealand the practice of registration was discontinued. They tried it. In 1983 their police force discovered—I have to assume that the New Zealand police are a fairly intelligent lot—that a gun registry did nothing to combat crime. In Canada police officers in Saskatchewan—I have to believe that police officers in Saskatchewan are as intelligent as police officers in any other part of Canada—

Mr. Taylor: Maybe more so.

Mr. Harris: Maybe more so, yes.