

Private Members' Business

We commend you for bringing this position so strongly to the attention of our parliamentary system.

It is signed, as I said previously, by the Chief of Police, Michel Denis.

This government might well talk this bill out today or it might defeat it, as I suppose is its right and as is our right as parliamentarians to approve or reject legislation in this House.

Let us think what is at stake. Let us remember that this is not stopping the ownership of guns. This is tightening up on rules which are way too loose in Canada. In the process, we could all contribute a bit toward saving the lives of people who are being killed by the discharge of firearms in this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Desjardins (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, the motion under consideration today gives us a welcome opportunity to debate an issue of utmost importance to Canadians—rising crime or violence in our society.

For openers, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that I totally disagree with the propositions advocated by the hon. member for Ottawa South in his motion today. And I will tell you why, Mr. Speaker, because I think it is important that I explain why I am so strongly opposed to some of the points raised in the motion of the hon. member for Ottawa South.

I am sure the hon. member will agree with me that it all depends on the way we look at our country as a society. I suggest he will be the first to admit that a city like Ottawa may not be the most violent or a place where crime is rampant.

We hear about the odd fight now and then in this city. There are cities where criminality is a lot more apparent. I should like to invite the hon. member for Ottawa South to visit my riding of Abitibi—Témiscamingue, for I am sure he will agree that my region has often been described as a hunter's paradise. If the hon. member were to come with me to Abitibi—Témiscamingue in places like Rouyn—Noranda, Val-d'Or or Senneterre and tell the people there that it will be more difficult to obtain firearms, their reaction would be to want to walk down the street with the head of the hon. member instead of the horns of a deer. Back home it is unthinkable that we would tell 150,000 people that we want to make it harder for them to buy firearms. I can tell the

hon. member for Ottawa South that people in my neck of the woods are born in houses full of firearms and that my region is indeed one of the most pacifist in Canada simply because people are used to firearms.

They know that a firearm can be the source of great enjoyment, yet that it can also be an extremely dangerous tool which has to be put in a secure place in the home. That is the point I want to get across to the member for Ottawa South. We have to be careful if we are thinking of imposing coercive measures on all Canadians, because all Canadians are not prone to indulge in crime or violence. I understand the intention of the hon. member when he makes this proposition, but I want to tell him that these would be quite restrictive measures in the case of a good many Canadians who are not violent by nature.

With respect to crime, the member for Ottawa South will agree with me that despicable murders are committed on a regular basis. Practically every day we hear about this sort of thing through newspapers and TV reports. But perhaps we should denounce more openly some of the papers that have a large circulation precisely because they specialize in crimes of this nature. I am not saying that we should hide those, but I say that some media give a lot of coverage to those cases. Every day, they show people covered with blood, people killed, and I tell myself that what we should be eliminating from this country are the causes that breed that kind of violence. We touched on those causes earlier. Poverty breeds violence. The member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell was referring to drugs and alcohol. Many things drive people to violence and, Mr. Speaker, it is not because they will not find a firearm that they will not be violent. Violence can be done with a knife, a hammer or a rope, and people bent on violence will commit it, whatever tool or means are available to them.

So, Mr. Speaker, the object of my intervention is to say to the member from Ottawa South that we have to be very careful, because there are people in this country who can— He mentioned police forces which agreed with his petition, I can understand that. But surely, thousands and thousands of other police forces did not state their opinion on the motion of the hon. member for Ottawa South. I am quite sure that in an area like mine, a motion like this would not be readily accepted. I say to the hon. member for Ottawa South that this is rather like a social debate. Statistics may show that crime is on the rise, but I think we should work more on the causes than