

Criminal Code

requires. Originally, his mother said that she did not want him to have the gun. The station phoned her for permission since her son was 16 years old when he bought this gun. His mother said: "No. Do not give it to him. He should not have a gun." However, he returned home and his mother said that he did not speak to her for four days or a week and she finally said: "What am I supposed to do? The law says it is okay, how can I say it is not?" Today, the law allows kids who are 16 years old to have guns. I think that is wrong. I think we need tougher and more effective gun control legislation. Many police across the country agree with that conclusion.

Finally, I wish to note that in previous Parliaments the provisions of this Bill have been distorted out of all recognition by those who really oppose any form of gun control legislation. The purpose of the Bill is two-fold. First, it is to ensure that anyone who possesses these lethal weapons meets the standard criteria which have been set out in the Bill, that is, that they do not have a criminal record for an offence in which violence was involved and that they have not been treated or hospitalized for a mental disorder. Is it really unreasonable to suggest that those criteria should be applied to all in Canada who would possess these dangerous weapons? Second, the Bill applies to ammunition and to the possession of ammunition as well.

Of all the consumer goods which are sold in Canada guns are by far the most dangerous and most destructive. It is the only consumer good in Canada the purpose of which is to kill—to kill animals or people. It is the one consumer good in Canada which has the greatest potential to criminal violence. We licence those who use cars. We license those who must sell prescription drugs. I suggest it is not at all unreasonable to suggest that those who want to use guns should have to meet the very basic standards which are set out in the existing provisions of the Criminal Code. For that reason, I am pleased to have been able to second this Bill and to rise to speak in support of it.

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I am indeed pleased as a private Member to be able to participate in this debate. It is my understanding that the essence of the Bill is to impose stronger measures for gun control which, in the opinion of the mover and the seconder, will right all wrongs which have occurred or may occur in the future.

I would like to speak on this issue from the point of view of those people who obey the law. The vast majority of Canadian citizens who own firearms use them for sport. I say this based on my discussions with many, many sportsmen, people who fire guns, both men and women, from the riding of Simcoe North who obey the law, not only every day but every time they use a firearm. I resent the suggestion that there will be a further persecution of these people who, by and large, respect the weapons which they use for sport. I think Hon. Members would find that these people have a high regard for law and order at all times. I come from the vantage point not as one who owns a gun but as one who represents people who own firearms.

I can remember attending a meeting where the consensus of a group of about 100 sports people was that there should be a stronger penalty in the Criminal Code for any crime in which a firearm is used. Carte blanche, they were ready to tack three years on to any penalty under the Criminal Code if a firearm were used in the commission of an offence. In other words, the people I represent want to get at the people who abuse firearms. They do not want to have a horde of bureaucrats testing people for mental stability and forcing needless examinations on the people of Canada.

I have had submissions continuously from my riding and I would like to review some of those with Hon. Members if I may. I remember on August 2, 1982, I presented a petition to the House on behalf of 728 residents of my riding, many of them members of The Orillia Fish and Game Conservation Club, to which I will refer in a moment. These people said that Canada needs tougher laws to control the criminal use of firearms. They said that we need tougher courts and tougher punishments, not further controls on those who use firearms for sport purposes. For that reason they stood in complete opposition to a previous Bill brought before the House by the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East (Mr. Allmand). I supported that petition with the conviction that I was representing these people and that they were right. I have had correspondence from The Orillia Fish and Game Conservation Club, a group of men supported by their wives and girlfriends who are very strong on conservation and who support the measures for gun control so long as they make good common sense. For example, The Orillia Fish and Game Conservation Club is in favour of deleting the present \$10 firearm acquisition certificate providing that all first-time firearm purchasers are required to take a firearms education course. Instead of some psychiatrist trying to decide whether someone at the time he or she saw them is mentally stable or not my people want gun control legislation which speaks to the safety of people who use firearms. They say that when one looks at the current legislation the onus of proof is put on to the private citizens as opposed to the state. For example, if a firearm is sold or transferred to a person who has a firearms acquisition certificate and a question develops later as to whether or not the person really had a certificate, the onus is on the vendor to prove that he or she did have it. We believe that the onus should be on the authorities and not on the innocent sportsperson who, as I say, wants to comply with the law and is very aware of the dangers of the improper use of firearms.

The Orillia Fish and Game Conservation Club with regard to the question of penalties and regulations which relate to storage and safe keeping of firearms have an unusual suggestion for the bureaucrats. They want the people who use and handle firearms all the time to have some say in these myriad regulations. I can tell Hon. Members that if they go up Highway 11 to Elwood Epp's store the most vivid part of the safe keeping of weapons in Elwood Epp's store is this. It is a sign on the door which reads: "Beware of dog." There is no bureaucrat in the world who thinks that is protection; but I can