

*Government Orders*

simple. The Minister of Justice has lumped these two separate issues together under the banner of crime control.

I do not believe criminals will register their guns and I believe the current firearms acquisition certificate system is adequate in the control of legitimate firearms owners. Therefore we should separate this bill. Even some members of the Liberal caucus support our motion.

At a town hall meeting on March 5 the hon. member for Lanark—Carleton stated he would like to see Bill C-68 split wherein the anti-crime and anti-smuggling components of the legislation would be dealt with separately from the issue of gun registration. They are two separate issues. I fully expect the Liberal member will vote in favour of our amendment.

I am prepared to support measures that genuinely reduce crime, but the burden of proof is on the Minister of Justice to prove gun registration will work. Therefore, before debate on this bill concludes I would simply ask some Liberal members to answer a few questions.

How will a firearms registration system truly protect society in light of the fact that other systems around the world have shown that it does not really make a difference? How will the government gauge the success of the program? How will the high costs be reconciled with making criminals out of innocent people?

I have some serious, common sense questions regarding who benefits from this program. The Minister of Justice has said registration will reduce crime and better equip the police to deal with crime in Canadian society by providing them with more information they often need to do their jobs.

Criminals will not register their weapons. I find it rather unlikely that policemen on the streets will approach a suspect's house any differently if the computer says the suspect does not own a gun. Caution will still be the rule.

I would like to take a moment to read part of a letter from two Calgary policemen:

On Saturday, November 26, 1994 my partner and I were dispatched to a noisy stereo complaint in northwest Calgary. After knocking on the door for an extended period of time, my partner and I were confronted by a man at the door with a loaded, sawed-off shotgun which he pointed at my partner's chest. The man was subdued, arrested and charged with four weapons related offences.

During our investigation we determined that the man was prohibited from owning or possessing any firearms until 1998 because of a weapons offence in 1992. The weapon he had in his possession was also a prohibited weapon.

Of all the four offences the man was charged with, only one, assault with a weapon, is an offence where police can take the criminal to jail. Pointing a weapon, possession of a prohibited weapon and pointing a prohibited weapon are minor offences in the Criminal Code, the criminal version of a speeding ticket.

How will registration possibly change what happened to us?

The man was legally prohibited from having a gun but he had one. Does a police officer have to get shot to make us realize that we have to get tough on these sorts of offenders?

According to the Department of Justice, in over half the cases in which possession charges are laid by police they are dropped once they get to court. That is the reality outside of planet Ottawa.

Addressing the inherent weaknesses of the Criminal Code and the charter of rights and freedoms should be our number one priority.

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Handguns have been registered in Canada for 60 years. In spite of this, using the minister's own statistics, handgun crimes have been on the increase. There is no evidence to indicate that universal registration of shotguns and rifles will be any more effective.

Are we really worried about hunters, target shooters and collectors? Maybe the Liberals are but I cannot accept that these people are responsible for the violence on our streets. It is the criminals using illegally obtained weapons who are responsible for gun related crimes. They should be the target.

The Liberals like to use the logic that if you have to register your car you should register your gun. If you register your gun you will become more responsible, less inclined to have an accident and less likely to have your weapon fall into the hands of criminals.

When we look at vehicle registration, what effect does it have on preventing theft, promoting responsible use and reducing accidents? Does vehicle registration prevent drunk driving?

In Calgary a teenager was recently sentenced to six years for running down and killing a police officer with a registered stolen car. Is the owner of the stolen car responsible for the death of Constable Sonnenberg? Should car owners have to take more responsibility ensuring that their vehicles are stored safely? Should we apply the same legal impediments to car ownership that the minister wants to apply to gun ownership? Would this have saved Constable Sonnenberg? Of course not.

No matter what steps we take to prevent our property from being stolen, criminals find a way to get at it. No matter how much registration we have the simple truth is that people will continue to break the law. Let us start focusing our legislation on discouraging those who might and punishing those do.

Let us send a collective message to potential criminals that this country does not tolerate violence and violent offenders. From now on the punishment will match the crime.

Becoming a legal firearms owner in Canada today is by no means a cakewalk. Applicants must obtain a firearms acquisition certificate which is an extremely probing form containing questions about personal matters such as drug and alcohol abuse, job loss and divorce, to name a few. Applicants must then furnish the names of two people from the prescribed list of occupations and relationships who can verify the information in