

*Government Orders*

What does imposing more restrictions on law-abiding citizens have to do with crime control? To use the minister's own words, how does registration make Canada a safer, more civilized place to live? In 1993 the Auditor General said that we do not have statistics indicating whether previous gun control legislation has had any effect on the misuse of firearms.

The results of just one short term evaluation done in 1983 were used as a basis for the even stricter gun control legislation introduced by Kim Campbell, Bill C-17 in 1991. When Bill C-17 was passed, there was no real proof that the new laws or regulations would meet the government's crime control objectives.

This justice minister has introduced legislation with some very clear crime control measures, such as stiffer penalties for using a gun in the commission of a crime or for weapons trafficking. However, in the same bill he has included restrictions on honest citizens who he cannot demonstrate have anything to do with the problem.

I object to the minister lumping measures against criminals in with measures against law-abiding citizens. I object to the implication that responsible gun owners are somehow guilty of a moral deficiency or harbouring criminal intentions simply because they own a gun. I am referring to such measures as mandatory registration and powers of search and seizure without a warrant.

In parts of my riding, every household has at least one gun. The police have been handed the power to search businesses and premises other than dwellings, without a warrant. The minister has created a new category of criminals in this country.

Where I grew up in northern B.C., someone is a criminal if they do something illegal, if they actively go out and break the law. This bill makes honest Canadian citizens criminals subject to a 10 year prison term if they do not do something. If they fail to register their .22 they can be thrown in prison for up to 10 years.

Ten years was the penalty Denis Lortie got for murdering three people and wounding 13 others in the Quebec National Assembly. Ten years is the maximum penalty this minister is seeking for a young offender who commits premeditated first degree murder. Is this minister saying that because someone fails to register their gun they must be going to commit murder or rob a bank?

This legislation is a slap in the face to every law-abiding gun owner in Canada. This government tells us that we need tougher gun laws against legal gun owners because stolen guns are used by criminals. Where is the proof that registration will prevent even one death? The government does not have any.

If crime prevention is not the objective of registration, then what is? Murder rates in Canada have remained relatively stable

over the last 15 years. Yet in April, the justice minister reacted to two high profile murders in Ottawa and Toronto by floating a proposal for a total ban on guns within city limits. Who did he think would be affected by such a ban, the criminals?

● (1630)

Tougher gun control legislation in many states has had no discernible impact on gun violence. In the United States 93 per cent of the guns used in homicides were apparently acquired illegally. New Zealand and Australia found registration did not help the police. It did not seem to have any tangible aim and did not help at the scene of a crime when the offender stole, borrowed or found a firearm.

What about in Canada? Here the government does not keep statistics on the use of illegally versus legally owned guns in the commission of crimes. Why not? Would they not support the government's position?

Last June I asked the Minister of Justice to prove to law-abiding gun owners that they are part of the crime problem before he enacts even tougher laws. We want proof that tighter restrictions for people who respect the law will prevent the criminals who do not respect the law from getting their hands on guns. Eight months later we are still waiting for an answer.

Restricted and prohibited firearms are already registered. What has their registration done to prevent crime? In most cases where restricted and presumably registered guns are used in crimes the government does not even know if the criminal bought the firearm legally. It does not keep records. There are already 1.2 million registered firearms in the country and this government does not have a clue how many of them were used in crimes because it does not ask. It knows guns used in crime were smuggled into the country and I fully support tougher measures against gun smuggling.

Why is the minister taking rights away from people who are not criminals? The hypocrisy of selling universal registration as crime control is readily apparent to everyone.

We know that thousands of guns are smuggled into the country all the time. What is the point of borders and laws if we cannot or will not enforce them? If we cannot close our borders to cigarette smuggling how much more difficult is it going to be when the government finally gets serious about gun smuggling? When will the government take a stand and give the police or the army the mandate to stop international trade in arms?

I visited with police in the Cornwall area. The minister and other members opposite like to talk about how they have the support of the police forces. Everyone knows gun smuggling is going on down there but they have not been able to stop it. When I questioned the police as to why they have not been able to stop the smuggling they said to me: "Why should we risk ourselves with a small revolver against automatic weapons? When we