

*Government Orders*

result is that we are going to refer this matter for study to a special committee. Sooner or later, this session will be prorogued and Bill C-80 will die. We will have no bill on gun control, we will have no government legislation and we will have a committee which will come up with a report.

I have been on so many of these committees that study matters where there has been a Conservative majority, and we have had unanimous reports. We have had them in the justice committee, the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration and we had them on the external affairs committee.

Just the other day we dealt with the unanimous report from the Standing Committee on External Affairs which recommended certain action by the government on international debt. The government did not accept one recommendation of that committee which had a majority of Conservatives on it. Therefore, the whole matter goes nowhere after months and months of study. That is what is going to happen here and it is a disgrace. It is a disgrace because the momentum which led to this bill was the massacre, almost one year ago, of 14 young women engineering students at the École Polytechnique in Montreal. It was found that a deranged young man by the name of Marc Lépine used a Ruger semi-automatic rifle to kill these women.

What was really horrible about this whole case is that he set the men aside and decided to kill only women. He did it with a gun that was too easily available. The Canadian public recognized that and said that there is something missing in our gun laws and they must be tightened up. How is it a young man like this can easily acquire a semi-automatic Ruger weapon? It is not, by the way, an ordinary semi-automatic. This is an assault weapon that has been used by SWAT teams on police forces. It is not a weapon that is usually used for hunting. It has got an extra powerful apparatus and fires a very deadly bullet. It was that incident which led to a campaign to tighten up our gun laws, with a view to preventing this kind of incident.

• (1630)

The minister herself went down to the École Polytechnique in Montreal in April and she met representatives of the students. They presented her with 25 boxes of petitions containing over 500 names of people who

wanted a toughening of the gun legislation. On that occasion, and it was reported in the press, she promised to bring in legislation to meet their demands before the end of May. We did not get it before the end of May.

I put questions in the House asking when the legislation was going to be presented several times. Finally, we got the legislation on June 28, I believe, the last day the House sat before the summer recess.

While the legislation was not perfect and it has some weaknesses, it definitely was a step in the right direction. There are many things in Bill C-80 which I myself had in my own Private Member's bills and motions. For example, the minister has accepted the idea that there must be a mandatory delay between the application for the firearms acquisition certificate and the granting of the firearms acquisition certificate. I had suggested two weeks. She went even further and I congratulate her on that. She went to 28 days.

That is very important because we have had incidents in Canada such as the one in Montreal where a young woman went in in the morning to buy a rifle. She was told by the owner of the sporting goods store that she needed a firearms acquisition certificate. She went to the police station, applied for the firearms acquisition certificate, got it the very same day in the afternoon, went back, bought a gun, and shot her boyfriend.

If there had been a mandatory delay in this particular case, and in many other cases, it would have given the police a bit of time to investigate the situation, as they are supposed to do under the legislation. It would have also provided a cooling off period. Very often, individuals in that situation are under an intense emotional pressure and, if given some time, they will cool down or other things might happen which might prevent the killing or the attack with a gun. Bill C-80 had that provision, that there be a mandatory delay of 28 days.

Bill C-80 also provided for a measure that I had in my Private Member's bill, that the application must be accompanied by two references of people in the community, references with respect to the responsibility of the individual applying, and also it required a photograph. All these things I think were improvements with respect to the screening out of dangerous, imbalanced individuals who might apply for a firearms acquisition certificate in order to obtain a gun.