

Government Orders

20 per cent and is now lower than the American national average.

Great Britain introduced tougher, more restrictive laws in 1988 which lowered the number of guns by 22 per cent and its violent crime rate has doubled.

The hon. member mentioned, for example, Israel, Switzerland and Sweden, that have firearm registration. I am not that familiar with them except to say that in Israel every able-bodied male of military age has an assault rifle in his house, not just a shotgun. He has a weapon with which to go to war.

For my relatives in Sweden every single man must go through military training and keeps the gat right in the House. Registering them is not a factor. It is other things and what we do to prosecute and persecute those who are involved in the criminal use of firearms.

Concerning the suicide argument, in Japan for example virtually no guns are allowed. They are banned in Japan. The suicide rate is much higher than Canada's. Just banning guns will not necessarily do away with suicides or domestic violence.

It is a horrible thing but men, not that we take any comfort in it, are assaulted at probably 10 times the rate of women by other men. Men glory in shooting other men too. Some people are crazy and we cannot legislate against that. Registering weapons will not do away with those people. We need an absolute clampdown on the criminal misuse of firearms.

I had a case in my riding. A guy sneaked across the American border in Columbia valley. He had with him a totally unregistered firearm, a .357 magnum, shoved in his jacket. He was stopped by a police officer. He knocked the police officer down. He stuck the muzzle of the gun in the female officer's mouth and said: "I'm going to kill you". He had plastic bullets which are only used for destroying people.

Thankfully someone intervened and was able to talk him out of this incident, although he threatened to kill two people. He had two firearms because he stole the police officer's firearm as well. He stole the police vehicle, took it up into the mountains nearby and torched, to the tune of about \$40,000.

He had committed illegal entry. He had an unregistered illegal firearm. He had assaulted a police officer. He had threatened to murder two people. He had some drugs on him. On and on it went. Finally they tracked the guy down and caught him. What did he get? They dropped the firearms offences and for all of the incidents he got 15 months in jail.

That guy should have been thrown in jail for 25 years. That is how we should handle misuse of firearms. That guy will be on the streets by June, I suppose with a totally unregistered illegal firearm waiting to threaten to kill the next person.

My question for the member is this. Is it not true that what we need in Canada is not more control of law-abiding citizens but stricter control and stricter sentences against those who misuse firearms?

• (1250)

[Translation]

Mrs. Venne: Mr. Speaker, I would like to give an answer to the member who asked why firearms should be registered, since it will not serve any purpose, etc. We heard his speech. I want to tell him that the purpose of registration is, first and foremost, to make people realize that a firearm is something designed to kill. It is not a toy.

Some may claim that westerners are born with a gun in each hand, the fact remains that these guns were made to kill. This is the message being sent to the public right now. People must be aware that a firearm is dangerous. Once they realize that, they will give more thought to registering their guns, since the registration process requires that some steps be taken, through the mail or otherwise. People will ask themselves: Should I keep that firearm in the house? Is it necessary? Do I really need it, or am I just keeping it in some corner without taking real care of it, without being concerned about it and about the fact that anybody could use it to commit an offence?

So, people will ask themselves if they need a firearm. I personally have firearms in my house. I am a hunter, but I have not gone hunting since 1992. As you know, the hunting season is in the fall. In 1992, we had the referendum on the Charlottetown Accord. In 1993, the federal election took place. In 1994, a provincial election was held in Quebec. And in 1995, we will have a referendum in our province. I had to give up hunting over the past few years, and I now wonder if I should keep my guns.

I discussed the issue with my spouse and he agreed that, indeed, if we do not go hunting any more, then we should consider getting rid of these guns. I should add that, this year, my name was randomly selected to go goose hunting in Cap-Tourmente. This is an exceptional opportunity but, of course, I will not be able to make it because something more important will take place in Quebec, that is the referendum, and I will have to be there of course.

So, we have to consider whether we want to keep our firearms at home, since we no longer use them. Do we really want to keep hunting? Can we still go hunting? Do we still have time for that activity? The fact that we need a license to own a gun, and that we have to register guns, makes us think about the whole issue and, as far I am concerned, promoting this kind of awareness is the purpose of that legislation. The other goal is of course to make our society safer, but the primary purpose is to make people aware of the fact that a gun is something that kills.