

*Government Orders*

I would remind the hon. member that there are an estimated five million rifles and shotguns in Canada. Nobody knows who owns them. Over the past 20 years 62,000 guns have been stolen and not recovered. Over 3,000 a year are lost and nobody knows where they are.

A registration system makes it easier for police control, for people in charge of legal control to trace possessions. This is why we register cars and boats. When they get stolen or burglarized people can trace them.

Today the Reform Party is challenging us to prove without any fear of contradiction, with 100 per cent certainty, that registration will be watertight or statistically proven. We have suggested that there is a whole body of opinion relating to crime. The police chiefs association, the Canadian Association of Police, the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Crime Association all tell us that registration will have an impact on at least controlling the guns that flow across the borders unregistered, unknown.

Surely it is worse, the precautionary principle. Where is common sense? Where is the fact that we should use caution when it comes to lives? The onus should be on us to show we have taken every possible action to ensure life is protected.

If registration would save one life—according to all the experts it will save many lives—then of course registration is possible. We have a duty as a government to do it. Bill C-68 is awaited by a great majority of Canadians. Eighty-eight per cent of Canadians in the Angus Reid poll say they are for registration, including a majority all across Canada. In some provinces it is up to 95 per cent, in another, 69 per cent. Every western province is for it.

Therefore, Bill C-68 is a big step forward. It is a reflection of what the majority of Canadians want. I am very pleased it is here. I will support it with great conviction.

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to listen to the rhetoric flow, having it interfaced with an appeal to common sense. That is what we ask for, to see some common sense in the gun legislation in this country. The hon. member mentioned there are estimates which range from five million to as high as 12 million firearms and long guns unregistered in the country.

• (1525)

The registration of handguns has been in effect since 1934. We have had 60 years of registration and it has done nothing to prevent criminals from acquiring and using handguns for criminal purposes.

I ask the hon. member for a succinct answer, if possible, because I know his time is up. How will registration of long guns be more successful than the registration of handguns has been?

He also mentioned experts who say that registration will work and that “it will save countless numbers of lives” I believe was the term. Name the experts. We would love to know who the experts are who claim that registration will save lives.

**Mr. Lincoln:** Mr. Speaker, I said it would save lives. If it saves just one life it would be worth it. They never talk about life over there. They talk about guns. They do not talk about human life. That is really what this bill is about.

The member makes the point that the registration of handguns has been in place since 1934 and it still permits criminals to use handguns. What would happen if there was no registration of handguns? Would there not be more crime?

If the registration system needs improving, then let us improve it. Today we have computers, all kinds of technical means to ensure that a registration system is far better than the one that was set up many years ago. This is the opportunity to do it. We have the technological means to set up a proper registration system. It will take time but the minister has allowed for that in the bill. Once it is set up it will be a modern, up to date registration system which may filter into the communities and which hopefully will involve the community at large, the grassroots. It will be far better than the system we now have, which is no system.

If the handgun registration system is not perfect, then let us perfect it. But at least it is a step toward caution, toward saving lives.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate at second reading of Bill C-68, An Act respecting firearms and other weapons, which was tabled on February 14, 1995, by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

That legislation, which was promised a long time ago by the Liberal government, and the tabling of which was postponed on several occasions, amends the Criminal Code and includes a new Firearms Act. It provides harsh sanctions for crimes committed with a firearm, as well as a system of registration certificates and a national firearms registration system.

This dense, complex and technical piece of legislation of 132 pages, with no explanatory notes, will give effect to the measures announced on November 30 by the minister. The delay in the tabling of that bill can only be explained by the considerable opposition it has stirred in the ranks of the Liberal Party. Over 30 Liberal members will vote against that bill, including the member for Timiskaming—French River, the member for Kenora—Rainy River. Some ministers are also said to have strong reservations about the new legislation.

I hope that these dissenting members will have an opportunity to express their views in this House, so that we get an idea of just how divided the Liberals are on this issue. The hon. member for