

Government Orders

The government has not provided a common sense justification for the registration of rifles and shotguns. I asked witness after witness who appeared before the committee how the registration of rifles and shotguns would reduce the criminal use of those firearms, and they were not able to answer. I have never heard a straightforward answer from the justice minister although I have asked him that question.

We have a handgun registration system that has been around for 60 years. We know it has not reduced the criminal use of handguns, because the handgun is the weapon of choice for the vast majority of street criminals. We see that it has been ineffective in this area and we ask why the justice minister would want to expand a failed system to include rifles and shotguns.

We have spent considerable time on the bill, but is it enough time? I say absolutely not. There was not enough time. When members are denied the right to express the concerns of their constituents in the House, those who want to express them, there is something wrong with the system.

I do not think we have had enough time either at the committee stage or at second reading stage. Time allocation was utilized. A deadline was placed on the number of days to hear witnesses. We went immediately from there into clause by clause study. We did not even have time to examine the testimony of witnesses on a day to day basis, because the time lag from the time they testified to the time we received the written testimony was four days. We did not even have time to fully draft our amendments, go over them with legal counsel and present them in proper form. The bill has been rushed and I ask why. If it is not to become mandatory for eight years, what is the big rush?

I make reference to a wonderful set of speaking points. At the bottom the Prime Minister said to his Liberal colleagues:

The Reform Party says it needs more time to debate gun control, but cops on the beat say they need gun control now.

It is very disturbing that Reformers are prepared to put the safety of police at risk in order to satisfy the gun lobby.

• (1150)

Talk about trafficking in fiction. I have not talked to a street police officer who has supported the bill although their political masters do. I have talked with colleagues all across western Canada. I have been all across the country from Kamloops in the west to St. John's, Newfoundland, in the east. I have talked with people who say that the bill is nonsense anyway.

My point is that if the cops on the beat need the bill now, why are we waiting eight years before bringing it in? It is not the Reform Party that is saying we should wait eight years; it is the government that is saying eight years.

As I said the other night, if guns are really dangerous and if this is not a hysterical response from people who do not know anything about guns and fear them, why are we leaving 58 per cent of the handguns that are supposed to be dangerous in the hands of the people? Why are we leaving them where they are?

In conclusion I would like to move the following motion:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word that and substituting the following therefor:

"Bill C-68, an act respecting firearms and other weapons, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day six months hence".

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The amendment is in order. We will resume debate on the amendment and go to the next stage of debate where members will have an entitlement of 20 minutes and 10 minutes for questions and comments.

I ask members to indicate to the Chair if they will be splitting their time.

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Liberal speakers will be splitting their time.

I am proud to rise in the House today in support of the bill. I believe gun control legislation will make our communities safer and will preserve and help Canada to evolve as a civilized nation where we can walk the streets and drive our cars with greater safety. It says a great deal about the kind of society we want to create for the future. Quite simply the bill seeks to prevent the killing of human beings.

There has been a great deal said about values in the debate. I have been concerned and have expressed my concern about the rhetoric of American values that seems to have permeated the debate. Let me give an example. Recently a survey was done in the United States among school children. When asked how they should respond if somebody tried to take something that belonged to them, the majority of American children said: "Kill them". When asked how they should respond to an insult, the majority said: "Shoot them".

An American senator on national television not too long ago suggested his mother should take out her gun and shoot if an intruder broke into her home, obviously not aware that in the majority of cases where that is the response to an intruder breaking into a home the home owner and not the perpetrator ends up dead.

As I said, the bill is about preventing death. Reformers have provided the strongest opposition to the bill yet their response is contradictory. They also say they are in favour of greater crime controls and greater punishment for criminals. Those are in the bill as well.

• (1155)

Let me just tell the party that says it is so concerned about the victims of crime what Steve Sullivan, a spokesperson for the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, says. He believes better gun control laws would prevent similar accidents, for example the deaths of two young children from