

Private Members' Business

Rather than increasing the criminal penalties for the use of firearms and acts of violence, which is the focus that we should be taking, this legislation simply frustrates the legitimate recreational use of firearms by Canadians.

Although I fully support the intent, I fully understand the reasons that this bill was brought forward. What I am saying is that it is really the wrong medicine, it is the wrong cure for the causes of criminal violence involving firearms. As a result of that I find it very difficult to support this legislation.

Mr. Lyle Kristiansen (Kootenay West—Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a few moments to make my own comments in support generally of the position that my colleague from Okanagan—Shuswap just made. I will perhaps be a little more general.

There are a number of us and I think a growing number of us in rural and hinterland Canada that are increasingly getting more than a little fed up with the attempt of city people to impose their political and social values on those of us who have a different way of life and we do have a different way of life.

My colleague from Kootenay East and I broke with our party and voted on third reading against the last regime of firearms control legislation that came before the House. We did that not because we disagreed with the principle behind that legislation but because we felt that it did not recognize sufficiently the differences between rural and urban Canada.

I have a lot of sympathy with people who live in downtown Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver where they are suffering the problems that automatically arise, whether it is caused by firearms or not as the instrument, from a crowding of people into a small space.

That has happened in New York and in Los Angeles and it increasingly I am afraid is going to happen here, particularly as the violent culture that we are bombarded with through the media gets heavier and heavier. We have not found a way to deal with it and the new technology makes it even less likely that we are going to be able to deal with it but this is not the way. One of the Liberal members—I do not know if he was the critic in this area for the Liberal Party—said a few moments ago that just because some people may not obey a law is no reason not to pass it.

I agree. Anyone would agree with that statement. But if there is widespread opposition and widespread con-

tempt for a given regime of regulation and law in large areas of a country, it is unwise for Parliament to act in defiance of that kind of feeling without a great deal more discussion and without allowing a great deal more time for people to be accustomed to different laws and different regimes. Otherwise we simply dare those forces in society, which I think are legitimate ones, to begin to feel a widespread contempt not only for that law but for law generally. That is unhealthy for democracy.

We have, over the last few years, passed two major pieces of legislation on firearms and regulation in Canada after a great deal of debate. Compromises were reached. Not everybody agreed with the final bill. However, to attempt so soon after we have just completed one of those to bring another piece of bureaucracy into an increasingly collectively deregulated, society and increase regulation on individual people, I think is wrong and unwise.

I do not like disagreeing with colleagues in my own party. I do not like disagreeing with people across the way or down in the other end of the Chamber. However before I represent a party I represent the people who sent me here. I am not running again. I have no political axe to grind on this.

I want to conclude by quoting a famous British labour statesman, Aneurin Bevan, when he said: "A motion is good petrol but a shockingly bad driver".

I understand the kind of emotions that are the driving force behind this proposed legislation, whether it is proposed by a Conservative, as in this case, or by a Liberal or by some of my colleagues in the NDP. But I reject totally that it is wise. All the bill will do if it should succeed is increase bureaucracy, increase the regulation of people, deny personal freedom, with no real positive result. Further it will bring the whole democratic process into disrepute and contempt by a wider number of Canadians, many of whom live in the kind of area that I represent.

I am glad to associate myself in this regard with my colleague who spoke a few moments ago, the hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap. It is the wrong time, even if it were intelligent. It is too much at once for people who feel that they have had enough already. The bureaucracy dealing with firearms registration is not yet equipped to deal expeditiously with the regulations we already have. For God's sake, let us not go any further at this time.