

Measures Against Crime

required to ensure that some of the legitimate concerns of sportsmen and others are recognized and satisfied.

I should like to take a few minutes to point out that representations from gun owners and sportsmen's groups in this country have not all been entirely critical of this bill. Many have been quite constructive. The Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation is an example of such a group. It is a large, representative and widely dispersed group of gun owners and sportsmen from that province. It is a responsible organization and has already done a great deal to promote safety and training courses in hunting. It has worked to promote greater responsibility in the handling of firearms generally and in training youngsters. They work to promote good conservation practices and good land owner-hunter relationships.

The Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation has examined this bill and enumerated a number of specific objections. I should like to touch on the main ones. First, the federation objects to the licensing system largely because of the great possibility of red-tape. I believe the government can accommodate them in this respect. Second, the federation objects to granting wide powers to the governor in council. Third, with regard to the provision with respect to possible fines or sentences for careless storage and handling of firearms or ammunition, the federation is concerned about the implications and application of this particular clause.

Fourth, it objects to a clause which makes reference to the fact that citizens are bound, under penalty of up to five years, to turn in a report to the police or the local firearms' registrar upon finding an empty cartridge abandoned in a field. If there ever was a nonsense provision in a bill, this has to be it. If there ever was a provision in a bill which would make people uneasy about government bureaucrats, it would be this kind of provision. Certainly, changes must be made.

The fifth point raised by the federation is that under this bill we will not be able to teach or instruct youngsters the basics of gun safety until they are 14 years of age. It will be illegal for anyone under the age of 14 to handle a firearm under any circumstances. I sincerely believe that that limit should be lowered to at least 12 years of age. The 12-year limit is now applied in Saskatchewan and in other provinces. I have a son who took that course three years ago. For the past two years he has been taking cadet courses in this city. He will be 14 this month. It seems to me that we are being unduly restrictive. I support the federation in their objections.

At the same time, to demonstrate their responsibility and concern in the field of gun handling and gun controls, the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation also spelled out its ideas of what would constitute a good, sensible gun control program. It has put forward alternatives to some of the provisions which are in this bill. I ask hon. members to note carefully the great similarity of principle in the points made by the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation and the points aimed for in Bill C-83.

What are the alternatives? The federation suggests the following steps; first, that all persons convicted of violent crime be placed under a lengthy order of prohibition barring them from possessing any firearm; second, that all persons who pose an identifiable threat due to mental instability or alcoholism be placed under a similar order of

prohibition; third, that persons on bail or suspended sentence following arrest or conviction for any violent crime should be prohibited from carrying a firearm, while a person on parole after imprisonment for such a crime might have a similar prohibition imposed as a condition of parole; fourth, that all new hunters and marksmen pass a provincial competence and knowledge test; fifth, that gun dealers be required to keep a record of firearms' sales and open it for police inspection.

● (1630)

The sixth recommendation is that any licensing system designed to cover the sale of firearms and ammunition should be a provincial system with authority to license business operations and sale and purchase transactions. The seventh recommendation is as follows:

That firearms or ammunition be sold, loaned, given, etc., only to a person in possession of either:

- (a) a valid hunting or trapping licence, with several years experience, and competency in firearm's handling or
- (b) a certificate of competency from a recognized firearms' safety course; or
- (c) a membership card from a recognized marksmen's club, or
- (d) a special police permit for a valid requirement not covered by (a), (b), or (c) above;
- (e) land owners.

When one looks at the variety of membership cards and licences referred to there, it seems to me that in the seventh point put forward by the federation one of the alternatives may be some kind of a simplified, universal uniform type of licence.

There are features of this bill which this organization very much supports, such as the banning of fully automatic firearms, increased penalties for the illegal use of firearms, and extended authority to the courts and the police to seize firearms in the interest of safety when serious incidents arise from domestic trouble or mental instability. As I say, this is the kind of constructive criticism we receive from responsible sports and gun clubs in the country.

The Wildlife Federation of Saskatchewan does oppose Bill C-83 in its present form. I support the federation in most of its concerns. Yet it should be obvious to anyone who examines the government's objectives, the federation's objectives and the alternatives, that there really is not that much difference in principle. It is in the method of implementation of those principles that the differences occur. I think the bill has had ample time for debate at the second reading stage.

Mr. Korchinski: You are kidding.

Mr. McIsaac: Further study can certainly be handled at the committee stage: my hon. friend is well aware of that. I accept the minister's word that he is prepared to consider amendments at the committee stage. For that reason, I will certainly support the bill at second reading stage.

One final point in respect of this bill which I would like to repeat again is that we need flexibility in respect of the proclamation of the sections relating to the kind of licensing provisions. The proclamation should be on a provincial basis, despite the fact the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) made of that this afternoon.

[Mr. McIsaac.]