

*Government Orders*

its constituents and have free votes. How does that align with party policy?

• (1705)

**Mr. Cummins:** Mr. Speaker, the issue is whether the question the poll has asked can be equated to Bill C-68. In my view asking the question "are you in favour of registering firearms" does not equate to Bill C-68 because Bill C-68 goes far beyond that. That is the point. The question that gets answered is the one asked.

In this instance the pollsters are not asking the right question. At best a series of questions would have to be asked regarding Bill C-68. Then we as members of the House would have to balance it off and ask what would carry the most weight, the registration of guns or the violation of the human rights or legal rights that we believe are inherent in it.

**Mr. Roger Galloway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for London West.

I express my support of Bill C-68 that has been before the House for several months now. The Minister of Justice has travelled the country in consultation and the bill has been scrutinized by the media. It has been studied by the standing committee of which I am a member. Over 70 groups and approximately 35 members appeared before the committee. The time has arrived for the House to act on the legislation.

Certain colleagues in the House frequently look to the United States to cite examples of public policy which in their view should be adopted in this country. I often question whether certain members opposite are more familiar with the American constitution as opposed to the Canadian Constitution.

Canadians have looked to the United States and at its pervasive gun culture. One need only watch the nightly news on any American station to realize the tragic consequences of the pro gun movement, a movement that shares the common beliefs of many people and parties in the House.

My own riding of Sarnia—Lambton borders on the community of Port Huron in the state of Michigan. Last September just as children were going back to school two individuals who were repairing a roof at a school got into an argument. One went out to his truck, got a gun and shot his co-worker in full view of the children.

In the same city, which is a relatively prosperous community of 100,000, there were seven shootings in schools last year. Children as young as 12 were bringing guns to school in their gym bags so they could settle a school yard dispute. This was all

happening in a very middle class prosperous community 400 yards away from my riding. This is terribly anecdotal material but I suggest it draws a distinction between our two countries.

Bill C-68 is an opportunity to define and shape the type of attitudes we as Canadians have toward the flow of guns, the possession of guns and the usage of guns in the country. It is a step toward recognition of the type of society based on our history and our values, one of which is to let other people speak without being interrupted. It distinguishes us absolutely from our neighbours to the south. It recognizes that there are legitimate uses for firearms and that there are concurrent obligations in such ownership.

As someone who sat on the committee I can quite safely say that the quality of the testimony and the evidence was of great concern to me. It was readily apparent that there were doctors appearing before the committee who were quite willing to give legal opinions and there were lawyers appearing before the committee who were quite willing to give medical opinions. Many individuals who appeared as members of responsible firearms groups or gun owners groups offered advice on accounting principles even though they had no background in it. They would offer advice on certain belief systems that bordered on religions.

• (1710)

As a result I suggest to those here and those watching that it is necessary to weigh the probative value of the evidence of an expert, for example in business administration, who because he has a doctorate in business administration transfers his advice to the National Rifle Association and the Fraser Institute, all the time posing as a criminologist.

Similarly one would question the opinion of a medical doctor who appeared before the committee and formed conclusions regarding suicide that fly in the face of empirical research on the subject, as well as the evidence of a group representative who purports to speak for veterans buried in Europe, victims of the second world war.

It is safe and true to say that there was a continuum of opinion before the committee on the bill, some of which quite frankly bordered on the absurd and some of which resembled reasonable, objective and logical suggestions.

Those who belong—and I would suggest there are some in the House—to the show me school, that is those who demand mathematical equations empirically setting out reductions in murder, accident and suicide rates, are demanding a burden of proof that from a logical perspective is false and perverse. We are hearing a lot of it tonight. I am referring to those who demand no registration but implicitly know that locking up one