

Government Orders

Court of the United States of the right to bear arms. It is not for citizens of the United States to have unlimited permission and lawfully be able to have arms.

I want to give one example of how that applies with the case of one small community in Illinois, Morton Grove, in the early 1980s, I think in 1982. It decided it wanted to do something about the proliferation of firearms. It decided to ban firearms. There was a municipal bylaw which banned firearms in that community.

The National Rifle Association became very alarmed at this and a great deal of lobbying ensued. As a result, the state of Illinois passed a law that stated municipal laws could not be more prohibitive with respect to firearms than state laws. That destroyed any opportunity for any further municipality in the state of Illinois to do what Morton Grove did.

There are other states with the same law. It was never challenged. The right of the community of Morton Grove to do that was not challenged on the basis of the second amendment. It was the lobbying by the National Rifle Association to make sure state governments moved in to prohibit that sort of thing happening anywhere else in that state and to its determination, any other state in the union.

The National Rifle Association is quite a prominent lobbying group in Washington. It employs approximately 50 people, has an annual budget of approximately \$100 million and in the Congressional elections in 1992 spent \$1.7 million on candidates favourable to its position.

There is no way the Americans will be able to strengthen their gun control laws significantly in light of that kind of lobbying and force opposed to them.

• (1625)

We just have to look at the Brady bill. Mr. Brady was shot at the same time as President Reagan, a very valued and admired public servant in the United States on the staff of the President of the United States. He was impaired for life. He and his wife worked tirelessly to bring forward a bill for stronger gun control. The bill he wanted was one stronger than the one eventually passed, but it was only through the force of personality and the type of people Brady and his wife were that they were able to get that bill at all.

Congress in the United States now wants to roll back some of the advantages and some of the things obtained in the Brady bill. I credit President Clinton when he says that under no circumstances would he allow that to happen and he would veto any such measures. That is not democracy. That is not allowing the people of the United States to choose.

We in Canada do not have that kind of force opposed to the free will and to the ability of Canadians to make their decision.

It is getting more difficult. The structured opposition is becoming stronger. If Canadians want stronger gun control it has to be now.

We want Canadians to decide. We want to have the bill go to committee. We want to have an intense study of the bill in committee. We are prepared to listen to witnesses, to members of Parliament and to make some changes to the bill.

The Minister of Justice said he wants to have the areas of black powder shooting, certified competitions and antiques looked at and perhaps defined a little more clearly; perhaps changes made in these areas. He has also given an assurance to the Canadian Police Association with respect to penalties and the criminalization of non-registration. He wants that looked at. Those are very significant directions. I presume he will be giving further instructions to the committee when he appears.

He has also stated that when he appears before the committee he will give the breakdown and the background information on why he has stated the registration system will cost approximately \$85 million. For those who are saying it will be \$500 million, I am sure they will want to hear the minister's information. That is fair.

The previous speaker from the New Democratic Party said it has not worked before so why are we trying again. We are trying again because it has not worked before. We are trying to put in a registration system that can work. It is not because it is a registration system. The registration system will work because of advances in technology, a registration that will be—

Miss Grey: The criminals can break in.

Mr. MacLellan: No, they cannot break in. That is nonsense. That is pure fabrication, absolute rubbish.

The possession licences and the firearms registration certificates will be cards similar to credit cards with magnetic tape which will have the information and when it is run through a machine similar to a machine that checks a Visa card, the firearm will automatically be registered. It could be registered in a place of purchase similar to Canadian Tire. It will feed into the main computer system at which there will be fire doors to prohibit the information coming back out.

It will be a safe system. That is one of the reasons we want to wait until January 1998 to start registration. We want to have the people of Canada realize this is a safe system, a beneficial system and it will not cost what they have been told it will cost them.

An hon. member: Will it fight crime?

• (1630)

Mr. MacLellan: It is going to fight crime too.

Unfortunately, I only have ten minutes. If the hon. member comes to the committee and listens, he will hear that, if he has