

Government Orders

Mr. Breitreuz (Yorkton—Melville): Yes, they will have more killing power, as my colleague has suggested.

This is convoluted logic. He says that over 500,000 handguns are dangerous and they need to be banned, but they are not dangerous if they leave them in the hands of their owners right now. There is a contradiction in what they are doing.

I wonder if my colleague would like to comment on some of the doublespeak, some of the contradictory statements we have been hearing today that somehow this will improve public safety. I rather doubt it will.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I do not doubt that the hon. colleague would like to respond, but the member has used up the entire five minutes for questions or comments.

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, what is the alleged purpose of Bill C-68? To listen to the Liberals, Bill C-68 is somehow magically supposed to keep our homes and streets safer. However, simply put, Bill C-68 will not prevent the criminal misuse of firearms.

There are two principal parts to the bill to which many people object. The first is the registration of rifles and shotguns. Criminals will not register their guns. Even the Liberals admit that. Therefore, the legislation will do nothing to prevent premeditated crime. Criminals do not rob banks with hunting rifles. If shotguns are used they invariably use a barrel that has been sawed off, which makes it illegal and not registrable. Consequently, Bill C-68 will not effect any positive change.

The second part involves the banning of hundreds of thousands of currently legal sports firearms. I speak of .25 calibre, .32 calibre, and handguns with barrel lengths of 105 millimetres or less. According to the minister, the reason for the ban is the fact that these firearms are inaccurate and ineffective and therefore there is no justification for owning them. What is really inaccurate and ineffective is the minister's research that came up with this whole rationale.

The .32 calibre is the World Cup and Olympic calibre. Canada has won many cups and medals with this so-called inaccurate and ineffective firearm. Linda Thom, who used a firearm proposed to be banned under Bill C-68 to win a gold medal for Canada in an Olympic competition, said that she represents the minister and stated that the firearm she used was so inaccurate and ineffective that her winning that medal for Canada must have been a fluke.

Many people who have never used a gun assume that recreational shooting involves only buying a gun and a box of ammunition, going to the range, pointing at the target and pulling the trigger. If that were true it certainly would suggest that there is little sport involved in the activity. The truth is that real recreational and competitive shooting involves much more. The firearm itself requires much consideration and work, both in the selection and refinement of its use. Purchasers must

consider barrel length, sighting radius, the type of sight, type of action, type and fit of grips, trigger pull, as well as many other considerations. Many of these items require changes and modifications to suit the type of shooting gun as well as the style and ability of the individual.

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Ammunition is rarely bought at the store but instead is custom loaded by the individual. Custom loaded ammunition is much more accurate than store bought. The actual loading is a specialized activity in itself. Each firearm shoots differently and the development of the best ammunition is an activity that requires time and dedication to the sport.

When one gets down to shooting, it involves much more than pointing at the target and pulling the trigger. Each club competition is rigidly controlled for both safety and enjoyment. The objectives of each shoot are designed to be both challenging and enjoyable. Participants compete against both their own abilities and those of other competitors.

Shooting involves the development of a series of skills, a great deal of practice and friendly competition, just like any other sport. Stereotyping of the sport of competitive shooters is not justifiable. Enthusiasts range from labourers to office workers, mechanics to doctors, men and women.

The minister claims, in rather vague terms, that registering rifles and shotguns will prevent crime and thus save lives. A total of 1,354 people died from firearm related incidents in 1992. This includes suicide, homicide, accidental death and legal intervention. The minister has not given any figures on his projections of lives to be saved as a result of the legislation or even demonstrated that any lives will in fact be saved. At the same time, he implies this is the principal reason for his action.

Many of the current supporters of the legislation do so with the rationalization that if it saves any lives at all then it is worth whatever it costs. Let us have a look at these costs. In doing this, I am going to use the minister's own figures despite the fact that I believe them to be inaccurate and misleading.

According to figures tabled by the minister at the justice committee it will now cost \$118.9 million to set up the registration system. This is up from the original estimate of \$85 million. What the minister avoids talking about is the actual cost of registration.

All handguns are registered now so we know the cost to the system to register a firearm. That cost is \$82 per firearm. The minister and his advisor, Wendy Cukier, have estimated the number of rifles and shotguns in the country to be about six million, which is curious given the auditor general puts the figure around 18 million. Using the six million figure and the known cost of registration, puts the actual cost of registration at \$492 million. If the true amount is halfway between the two