

*Private Members' Business*

indicated a moment ago. But, coming back to my example, you do not need one to get a case of beer.

In our society, it is not forbidden to hunt while drunk.

[English]

That is important. It is not an offence in Canada to hunt while drunk. There is no such offence in this country. It is only illegal to point your gun at something once you are drunk. You could walk around in the bush with a loaded gun on your back and be drunk, provided you can stand up, and that is not an offence. There has to be something wrong with our laws when that kind of nonsense is allowed to happen. You can probably buy a case of dynamite easier than you can buy a case of beer. What is wrong with us?

We have a proposal today by a colleague to tighten up slightly—and it is only slightly; let us not kid ourselves—our gun legislation in this country. We are proposing under this bill to have one firearms acquisition certificate per purchase of gun. Does that not sound reasonable? Every time you buy a new gun, you go to ask the police and the authorities whether you are fit to own one.

[Translation]

The existing legislation states that the certificate shall remain in force for five years. How are we to know, Mr. Speaker, if you or I will still be fit to own a gun four years and 364 days from now?

I sometimes wonder if I will still have all my wits from one week to the next! I surely am in no position to tell what will be the case four years and a half or five years minus one day from now.

[English]

Yet, five years from now or five years less a day I could use a firearms acquisition certificate that I bought today and buy my 499th gun with it. That is not against the law. Why do we need firearms legislation?

• (1740)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, one third of the homicides reported in Canada in 1989 were committed with a firearm. Of the 218 homicides by gun, 44 per cent were committed with a rifle, 25 per cent with a handgun, 17 per cent with a shotgun and 2 per cent with a sawed-off rifle or shotgun. These are very sad statistics.

[English]

A few years ago I read in a United States magazine about fire arms incidents there. Of course they are far worse there than they are here, but I think the message was obvious. It said, and I paraphrase because I do not remember the numbers exactly, that last year in Britain there were 250 homicides by guns; in France there were 300; in another European country there were so many; and in the United States there were 10,552 or something to that effect. It ended by saying: "God bless America."

The same article made an important point. Of all the United States presidents who were murdered, assassinated, or on which there was an attempt against their life, every single one of them was with a firearm. No U.S. president was stabbed. No U.S. president was ever attacked with any other kind of a weapon than a firearm.

In this country we have only lost one national political figure, and his statue is right at the back of this building. It was Thomas D'Arcy McGee, and Thomas D'Arcy McGee regrettably was shot.

Is it not time we started to learn from what we know so well?

[Translation]

I have here a letter signed by Mr. Michel Denis, the Chief of Police of Hawkesbury, in my riding. This letter was addressed to my colleague from Ottawa South, who sponsored this bill.

It reads:

[English]

Dear Sir:

I read with considerable interest your proposed Bill C-273 regarding gun control.

We the Hawkesbury Police Force fully support your position. This position enables us to ensure a better protection to our communities.