

Government Orders

his life, senselessly, by someone who had managed, under existing legislation, to obtain not one but two firearms.

We must recognize that the legitimate use of firearms is acceptable, but when used maliciously, firearms can cause irreparable, irreversible damage.

• (1350)

How can one measure the damage of a ruined life, the nightmare experienced by the surviving family, who relive the event every day and every night, because they can never forget? This is not death due to illness, it is violent death brought about by the use of a firearm. And that is a price no society can afford.

I know the debate on firearms is heated. I know the whole question of registration is especially controversial.

[English]

Yesterday in question period and again today our friends from Reform were questioning the cost of \$85 million. They saw that as being too much. One Reform member said yesterday that we should send that money to cancer research or not spend it.

I wonder if the Reform members have calculated the cost to society of a simple trial, of putting people in jail, of police control for people who have used guns. The cost is far greater not only in terms of money, but certainly in terms of life lost.

What is the value of a life? Is it \$1 million, \$2 million, \$80 million, \$85 million? I wonder how much the lives of the 14 young women killed at the polytechnique were worth. I wonder how much Michael Hogben's life was worth. They are not statistics. We do not measure their lives, their souls, their beings in monetary terms.

It seems to me that society has not only the right but a duty to make sure we take every possible step we can as legislators to try to eradicate the ills caused by guns. If registration helps, even if it is not watertight, even if there are loopholes and even if we cannot prove statistically that it will work 100 per cent of the time, if it makes committing crime more difficult, then it would be worth it and would be money spent well.

Registration will certainly improve the control of the flow of firearms across borders. It will help the police trace firearms used in crime. Moreover, it will place the responsibility on the individual himself or herself. When someone has to go through a registration process, be it for a car, a boat, or any possession, it ties a special responsibility to that person to care for that possession.

Registration will be an immense deterrent. In fact, it is no accident that a great number of community organizations, police organizations and all anti-crime community organizations and institutions are heavily in favour of registration. That includes the great majority of people in the province of Alberta where

most Reform members are from. British Columbians should be proud because it is the case in B.C. as well.

If registration and gun control legislation were only to save one life, I suggest it is worth it. I know the Bloc members share our view on this and I thank them for it. On this side we hope, and are convinced, that if it saves many lives, then Bill C-68 will be a major piece of legislation. Not only will it be because it is Liberal legislation, the work of this government and this Minister of Justice, but because it is a piece of legislation that society at large needs and wants.

Today we are in the process of getting it. Once again, I pay tribute to, thank and am very grateful to the Minister of Justice for having brought this bill forward.

• (1355)

I hope the great majority of us here will reflect the majority view of Canadians at large, and 95 per cent of those in Quebec, who believe that gun control legislation is not only needed but it was needed yesterday. It is a great piece of legislation. It is a forward piece of legislation and I will support it with great conviction.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I get the impression from the rhetoric over there, the violence of it and the great emotion I heard that this is exactly the type of approach to gun control that makes people in this country frightened. The reasoned arguments which were expressed by the justice minister, although I emphatically disagree with them, do not carry the same connotations as what came across the aisle from the hon. member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis.

If one is to take seriously what he was saying, I am quite convinced that this is the type of thinking, this rabble rousing, this fanning the emotions of people which will ultimately lead to the confiscation of private arms in this country. That is why people are so concerned.

The hon. member refuses to deal with real numbers. He says that he thinks registration will be a deterrent. Those were his words. We do not pass legislation of this magnitude simply because we think something.

He quoted the chiefs of police, as did the Minister of Justice. I would remind both members that when gun control was being discussed in this House in 1976, the police chiefs presented a brief to the Standing Committee on Justice. In that brief they emphatically stated that registration would serve no useful purpose in the control of crime. Whether the organization had—

The Speaker: My colleagues, we will have seven or eight minutes remaining after question period and the hon. secretary of state will have the chance to speak at that time.