

concept, particularly when it is also billed as some sort of trade off for tougher measures.

● (2030)

It is said that measures on guns, wiretaps, and sentencing are a trade-off for abolishing capital punishment and a sop to the police and prison guards. I think that is too simplistic a proposition, but it is indicative of the type of perception the people of this country have about this kind of legislation, and I think it is a very unhealthy state of affairs.

It seems to me that the government could very easily have found a more logical and simple way of accomplishing a pretty laudable objective, but just as the government did in the case of the Minister of State (Fisheries) (Mr. LeBlanc) with respect to lobster regulations, and in the case of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald) in attempting to bring some logic into the Anti-Inflation Board procedures, it has messed it up again, which it has a propensity for doing. Just as the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Jamieson) have had to admit that they had to abandon their plans for a levy on exports, and just as the Minister of State (Fisheries) has had to modify his lobster regulations, so I fear will the Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General—

Mr. LeBlanc (Westmorland-Kent): Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege, I really do not want to contradict the hon. member, but if he had attended the session which most of his colleagues attended, he would have found that we did not change the policy. We simply explained it, and it is proceeding as planned.

Mr. MacKay: I appreciate those remarks from the Minister of State (Fisheries) but I think his troubles are not yet over, judging by the response of the fishermen in my constituency. It may be a little premature for him to say that he will not have to change his policy, judging by the type of reaction—

Mr. LeBlanc (Westmorland-Kent): I said we have not changed it.

Mr. MacKay: I say that perhaps the minister is a bit premature in assuming that he will not have to change that policy.

In any event, as far as these particular provisions are concerned, I will deal with the bill. I am sure hon. members will appreciate my passing references to the bill, although I intend to mention some other matters tonight involving civil liberties and types of legislation which I am sure Your Honour will find relevant.

The proposed section 103 is a very interesting provision. It provides the following:

Whenever a peace officer believes on reasonable grounds that an offence is being committed or has been committed against any of the provisions of this Act relating to prohibited weapons, restricted weapons, other firearms or ammunition, he may search, without warrant, a person or vehicle, or place or premises other than a dwelling-house, and may seize anything by means of or in relation to which he reasonably believes the offence is being committed or has been committed.

To begin with, why without warrant? This sets the tone for all this legislation. I suggest—and this is what people

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in my constituency believe—that this legislation is a need-less encroachment on the civil liberties of people. Clause 83 of the bill reads as follows:

Every one who carries or has in his possession a weapon or imitation thereof, for a purpose dangerous to the public peace or for the purpose of committing an offence, is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for ten years.

What sort of offence is meant by that?

Then there is another interesting provision clause, clause 86, which says:

Every one who is an occupant of a motor vehicle in which he knows there is a prohibited weapon

(a) is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for five years, or

(b) is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

What about the case of a person being in a car before he knows that there is one of these so-called dangerous or prohibited weapons present? Is he supposed to request the driver to stop the car in the middle of a lonely road so that he can get out?

These are only a couple of examples, and they just underline the ludicrousness of what is attempted to be done here. This is like hunting squirrels with an elephant gun, and I hope the Minister of Justice will do as he did with the criminal law amendments bill—change some sections in committee—and give a little bit of thought to improving and making a bit more workable and a bit more sensible what is essentially not a bad idea, in theory.

As I said earlier, I have been receiving a tremendous amount of mail and telegrams—some orchestrated, some not orchestrated—from people in my constituency whom I know to be honest and responsible people. They are not extremists or people who are alarmed that the government is suddenly going to declare a dictatorship because they do not have any guns with which to defend themselves, but they resent sincerely this further encroachment on what they consider to be a reasonable privilege, that is, to possess rifles, or in some cases pistols, for a legitimate use.

I will read one letter. It is very typical and very short. It is dated March 1, and says:

Dear Mr. MacKay: This is to voice my opinion with regards to the proposed legislation on private ownership of long guns . . . This could be just one more case where the private citizen has a privilege lost or restricted. The restriction in my opinion as well as many others would be in vain as common sense no doubt has told you, as it has me, that criminals will be no harder put to obtain such firearms. I fear that government will be swayed by the anti-gun lobbyists whom I am confident do not represent the opinion of the majority. Hoping my opinions are worth your attention. Yours sincerely,

(Signed) James Langille
Sunny Brae
Pictou County.

Surely there must be a bit of common sense involved here in assessing the priorities of this type of legislation. Some time ago there was a statistical analysis saying that most murders in Canada were committed in the kitchen. Probably the Minister of Justice ought to consider abolishing kitchens; that might help the situation.

There is another school of thought which says that if guns are dangerous, so are knives and so is gunpowder. One could go on to ludicrous lengths, and I do not intend to do that tonight in suggesting dangerous objects that might