

Criminal Code

That letter expresses the feelings of thousands of Canadians. It is amazing to realize the depth to which many Canadians have studied this piece of legislation. It is commendable that they are studying various bills going through this House, particularly this one. I received a letter from Mrs. Stella Ferguson, a lady from Lethbridge, Alberta, which reads as follows:

1. The Criminal code is much too important to have any portions thereof left to order in council.
 2. Why should law-abiding citizens be subject to another high-cost bureaucracy in order to obtain a fire-arms' acquisition certificate which will have little effect on crime control.
 3. Competency courses in the handling of firearms should be made available before any such requirement is implemented.
 4. The U.S. safety council indicates that over 72 per cent of all violent deaths—auto, falling, drowning, shooting, etc.—are related to the misuse of alcohol and drugs. Although not stated by our justice department we have reason to believe the percentage in Canada is even higher. This problem should be looked at before we consider gun control.
 5. Bill C-51, despite the government propaganda, will in no way make sentences any more severe because of all the summary conviction, provisions and the leniency of our justice system that makes a mockery of any crime committed.
 6. I can see no way that Bill C-51 will change our present situation by preventing suicide as any fire department or emergency service will state that prescription drugs are used in more suicide attempts than all other known means.
 7. Homicides in family disputes where firearms are not handy would still occur. A majority would use other weapons, which today are used as much if not more than the firearm in this type of homicide.
 8. The reasons for making a firearm restricted or prohibited are too vague. These reasons should be spelled out.
- I urge you to do whatever is necessary to protect my freedom and heritage.

The minister seems to be adamant and stubborn in regard to this particular bill. It is not wanted by the people. It is not the answer to crime. I hope he will give serious consideration to accepting this amendment and let us get on with the summer recess.

Mr. Stan Schumacher (Palliser): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to participate in the debate surrounding these motions by the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) concerning the regulations to be made under the proposed amendments to the Criminal Code dealing with gun control. In the first place, I find it very distasteful that we should give the government any authority to make regulations under the Criminal Code. When people think of the law, the Criminal Code is probably the prime example of law in the country because it sets out most of the crimes that have been declared to be such by the parliament of Canada. By its very nature, the crimes that are declared to be such should be very public, and before the people, so they can understand what they are not to do. They should be publicized at least in the statute books.

I am very concerned about the growing tendency in this country, which I suppose is worldwide—or at least in all western countries—to give more and more power to the executive to make regulations governing the daily affairs of citizens, without any reference to their representatives to see whether the citizens actually approve of those actions. It is particularly

[Mr. McKenzie.]

important in this area dealing with criminal law. As I have pointed out, that is the prime example of law in the country.

● (1550)

Lately I have been dealing with crimes created under other statutes, and I would like to give the House an example of what can happen under the delegated authority we have given the government in many pieces of legislation passed by this House. I think it is time we stopped being so free and easy about giving the executive of this country that kind of power. I have been involved in defending the manager of an elevator in my town against charges levied against him at the instance of the Canadian Wheat Board.

These charges resulted from a change in policy adopted by the government without reference to this House. As a result of that change of policy, which was not publicly disclosed to the people involved, apparently in the view of the Canadian Wheat Board many managers of country elevators are now guilty of crimes they did not think they were guilty of when they did the things they are alleged to have done. Under the Canadian Wheat Board Act, the governor in council or the Canadian Wheat Board can make regulations. The Canadian Wheat Board does this periodically under the guise of something known as "instructions to the trade." The board sends out letters. They are not even under the seal or letterhead of the government of Canada: they are not on anybody's letterhead, not even on the letterhead of the Canadian Wheat Board. These letters are very innocuous documents, but as a result of them, if people are judged guilty of what they are alleged to have done, it can be very costly.

I submit that we should stop permitting this delegation in all areas, but we should start with the criminal law. When we deal with the Criminal Code, the law should be stated within the statute. We should not be forced to go to some other source to find out what crime may have been created by some minister of justice somewhere down the line. I suggest that the government does not really want to tell us what the regulations are. If the government was honest about this bill, it would.

I agree with what the previous speaker said. This bill is unnecessary. It is a reaction to something which has received the government's attention. There is an outcry in the country against the rising forces of lawlessness and against what has been happening under the administration of this government over the past number of years, and the government is reacting by producing this legislation. This bill is a watered-down version of legislation we had last session. That legislation was totally unacceptable. Even though it took several months of discussion in this House to convince the government that it was unacceptable, the government finally got the message. I suggest that this legislation is unacceptable primarily because it is unnecessary.

It has been my observation that most of the crimes committed with firearms have been committed with hand guns, and hand guns are not even affected by this bill. Our present controls on hand guns go back to the thirties; they are now some 40 years old. They are among the most stringent in the