

Measures Against Crime

I have spoken at some length on some of the areas of concern in this bill. There are many other aspects of the bill that should be further considered as well. I would hope that the bill could be moved quickly to the Standing Committee of Justice and Legal Affairs so that each issue raised could be considered in depth and so that Canadians who are interested will be able to take part in the deliberations. I would also hope that the minister has some amendments to make in view of the representations that he has received that he would make them known at the earliest possible time, and certainly as soon as the bill goes to committee.

Mr. G. H. Whittaker (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, speaking today on Bill C-83, the peace and security bill, I should first of all like to say that there are many people in Canada who believe this bill relates to capital punishment. This is not their fault. Rather it is the fault of the government which has done a very poor job in explaining that we have two bills before us, one being the peace and security bill and the other bill being on capital punishment.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) and the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) spend much time and money advertising on television and radio in an attempt to convince the people of Canada to change their opinions on capital punishment rather than on properly explaining the issues. They have done much to confuse it. Bill C-83 on peace and security contains some 73 pages, half of which are on gun control. The remainder deals with wiretapping, special crime inquiries, custody and release of inmates, crime, and crime prevention measures. These are considered to be more of the housekeeping type of amendments to acts that have already been passed by the House of Commons.

There can be no doubt that this bill should be divided in two, that is, the gun control section split from the remainder of the bill and introduced as a separate bill. It is for this reason that our party proposed a motion asking that the bill not be read a second time, but that it be sent to committee to have the gun control section severed from the rest. I believe this action should certainly be taken and I only hope that our motion will be called before it is sent to the Standing Committee for Study following second reading.

As this comprehensive gun control bill is the first ever to be put before the people of Canada, there is great concern shown by the people over this bill, and they believe that we should have an opportunity to study it, by itself, in committee. There is no doubt that it needs a lot of clarification and much discussion in committee. It does very little to control the criminal elements. In its present form it could be the cause of many innocent people getting criminal records.

Hunters and sportsmen could probably live with such a bill if they could get a licence to own a gun. They are already licensed to hunt, and in many cases they believe that this same licence would be the one that would entitle them to own a gun. But this really is not the case as this bill clearly spells out.

What does legal responsibility in the act really mean? What is safe storage? Is safe storage a person's home, provided it is locked, or does the government really mean

that guns have to be kept in a separate locked gun closet? A locked home is often broken into. People who break into a home can also very easily break into the gun closet. Does it mean carrying it in a locked car or locked truck? Surely if one is to transport guns or firearms either to or from the gun shooting clubs or for hunting, this must be done by car or truck. Criminals have no difficulty in breaking into locked cars or trucks.

Getting back to the legal responsibility, if a gun is stolen, how can it be proven whose gun it is? Certainly this legal responsibility can and will only apply to the very innocent. Section 105 (2), "seizure without warrant", alone would start a round of court cases involving people who are innocent of wrong-doing because peace officers would then be allowed to enter homes without search warrants and seize firearms which they feel are out of place. This is often the case when we pass a law such as this without really looking at and studying the ramifications.

The seizure of weapons by police, when the safety of a person is in danger, is probably not too bad or too hard to live with, providing the police do not use this sort of thing indiscriminately. I can think of many times when this should have happened, but because it couldn't the police were unable to perform their duties properly. I would also hope, if a section such as this were passed, it would not allow the police to show their muscle when it was not really necessary.

We already have laws about restricted and prohibited firearms. However, the registration of these is being tightened in this bill. The bill clearly says that the only way that you can have such a restricted firearm, is when there is need for protection of life, lawful occupation, target shooting, or bona fide collecting. This proposed section also needs some clarification so that people are assured that their rights will be protected.

● (1510)

The target shooters and the bona fide collectors are the ones about whom we are most concerned. In many cases the bona fide collector can prove that he has made the gun inoperative by removing the firing pin or other dangerous parts of the gun, and therefore he feels that he should not be discriminated against. As hunting has become more and more limited in the more populated areas in Canada today, target or trap shooting is a very popular form of diversion for the sportsmen. They are therefore able to use their guns in the same manner as they did when they were actually hunting, and this allows them to be participants in sports rather than just being spectators. The fact must be recognized that these people cannot and should not be restricted in this kind of relaxation which they enjoy.

Let us now deal with the section on licensing. This is the section about which, I believe, most people in Canada, certainly those who want to have guns for hunting, are most concerned. This provision says that anyone who wishes to possess guns or firearms must have a licence. To obtain this licence they must have two designated guarantors who are responsible people in the community.

Just who will designate these responsible people? The government in power will, of course. Will they be political appointees? Will they be paid employees? Certainly if they will be paid political employees there will be no problem in