

*Measures Against Crime*

It is interesting to note that in this session of parliament we have already passed Bill C-71 to tighten up the bail laws and provide for better security of people in our communities in respect of dangerous persons. A person charged with serious offences or charged a second time on a serious offence while on bail will have to show why he should be granted bail.

The peace and security legislation before us now makes a new provision related to dangerous offenders which will replace the present law related to habitual criminals and dangerous sex offenders. The penalty provided under the section relating to dangerous offenders will be indeterminate and will apply to persons involved in crimes of personal violence or sex related crimes such as rape, indecent assault, and gross indecency, crimes which carry a penalty of 10 years or more. Safeguards are provided for this very severe penalty by the necessity of an application to the provincial attorney general of the province involved for this offence.

Another safeguard for the accused will be that after the first three years of the sentence the National Parole Board would review the sentence at least every two years to make sure that a person is not put away indefinitely under unreasonable circumstances. Likewise, the community to which the person under an indeterminate sentence would be paroled would be protected because the parole board would have two members added to it from the area to which the offender might return.

The legislation before us increases the powers of the police to deal with organized crime by giving more power to wiretap phone-calls for longer periods and the removal of the necessity to notify people that their phones have been tapped. I understand the complaints which have been made by the police in this type of case during the last few years. If the police were not completely sure they would get enough evidence to secure a conviction in the one series of wiretaps they would not do it because they would have to notify the criminal within 90 days, and therefore he would know he was being investigated.

I believe the public's right to privacy will be adequately protected by the necessity for an application to a court for the permission to wiretap. That is of course provided for by this legislation and under the existing legislation. It seems to me that this provision after its application for a few years should be reviewed by the government to make sure it is not being abused.

These are a few of the provisions of this bill. There are many others such as those relating to crime commissions and parole and the Parole Board. However, part of this legislation has been the gun control section of the bill. Even last year before we had this peace and security legislation before us and Senator Cameron's bill relating to gun control was before the other place, I received many letters and inquiries from constituents concerning gun control.

● (2140)

I believe that the public consciousness with regard to the whole question of gun control has been heightened by two tragic incidents which occurred in high schools in Ottawa and in Brampton this past year. The hon. member for Peel-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Milne) spoke the other night in

[Mr. Foster.]

the House and described in a very vivid way those tragic incidents which occurred in Brampton in his constituency. These were dramatic and tragic events which were reported on front pages from coast to coast, but they are not isolated ones.

In 1974 some 1,500 people died in Canada from gun shot wounds. That is a 30 per cent increase since 1970. Firearms were used in half of Canada's 543 murders in 1974, and in at least one third of the 15,000 robberies which occur each year. A recent public opinion poll showed that over 80 per cent of Canadians favour registration of firearms. However, in spite of this large percentage favouring some form of gun control, a large number of people are very concerned that this legislation will not be totally effective. I have received a large number of letters, petitions, and inquiries from fishing and hunting associations and gun clubs in my constituency.

There seem to be several misunderstandings of the legislation which I think are worth mentioning. For example, some people believe that all guns will be banned. They will not. Some believe that all guns will be confiscated. They will not. Others believe that all guns will be registered. They will not. Some people believe that a person would be responsible for a crime committed with a gun that was stolen from him even though he took reasonable care in storing it. He will not, of course.

Having mentioned some of the areas in which I believe there is misunderstanding of the legislation, I should like to mention some of the provisions of the gun control legislation. Especially dangerous weapons, such as machine guns, will continue to be prohibited. Other guns, such as sawed off shotguns and cheap handguns like the "Saturday Nite Special" will be prohibited as well. The government, by order in council, may add to this list of prohibited weapons, but it cannot add guns of a sporting or hunting nature. That would have to be done by parliament. Handguns will continue to be licensed, as they are now, as restricted weapons, but they will be licensed on a needs basis, and the need for these guns will be for protection of life, for use in a legitimate business, for target practice, or as collectors' items.

Long guns will not be licensed, but gun owners will. People 18 years of age and over will be licensed for a five year period under the proposals of the bill. Special licensing of younger people between the ages of 14 and 18 will be required for hunting, for target practice, or for training in the use of firearms, provided that the parents or guardians are in agreement. There is also a special provision for younger than 18-year-old hunters who live in areas in Canada where hunting is a necessity for food.

Owners of guns will be required to take reasonable care in storage of guns. Too many tragic accidents occur every year as a result of careless use and storage.

Police will be given authority to seize a weapon if they consider that the gun constitutes an imminent danger to the safety of a person. For instance, if a police officer is called to a domestic squabble and there is a gun involved, this provision could be used, and it would be more practical than the present law which requires a police officer to have a warrant.