

Government Orders

dealing with in terms of high risk offenders, we too can respond to Canadians and come up with a solution that will be satisfactory. It may not be to everybody but it will to most.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge that at this very moment one of my constituents, John Rochon from Elliot Lake, is now in Argentina at the Pan American games. He is one of our shooters. He is a past medalist for our country and I wish him well. His wife, Donna, is at home waiting for news of progress in Argentina. It is people like John Rochon that are exemplary.

Lionel Houle is an elderly gentleman in Massey, Ontario who came to me with concerns about passing on his guns to his children. It is people like that who have convinced me that the gun-owning community in Canada deserves our respect, deserves to know that we care about their point of view. They are prepared to partner with urban Canadians to put this issue to rest once and for all and to obtain a solution that is effective for the entire country.

• (1240)

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it my pleasure to speak on the motion my colleague for Yorkton—Melville has put forward.

The motion recognizes the problems with Bill C-68 and the fact that the bill deals with two distinct areas: crime control, which everyone supports; and a repressive gun control scheme which will cost hundreds of millions of dollars, will not reduce crime and will turn thousands of Canadians into criminals for simply not registering their guns properly.

It is vitally important that the House legislates clearly and supports only those bills which deal effectively and efficiently with the problems of the country. The justice minister could have brought forward this kind of bill, but he put the two issues together. He knew that Canadians were sick and tired of violent criminals who use firearms. Therefore, Bill C-68 has tougher penalties, including minimum sentences of four years for certain crimes.

The bill also penalizes gun smugglers and provides a deterrent against smuggling crimes. Under the proposed legislation profits from smuggling and smugglers' vehicles can be seized. In addition gun smugglers can expect tough jail sentences when they are convicted. These are the types of measures that Canadians are calling for and I fully support those elements of the bill. In fact, I would like to see many of these penalties extended even further.

Unfortunately the legitimate desire of Canadians for crime control are exploited by Bill C-68 in order to forward the personal agenda of the justice minister. He has stated very clearly that he believes the army and police are the only ones in Canada that should be able to own guns. It is on the public record. Obviously the minister is using Bill C-68 to promote his own wish list and crack down on legitimate gun owners.

When the justice minister speaks about Bill C-68 he suggests there is wide support in the Canadian public for all elements of the bill. He cites polls and claims they support his views. What questions were asked? If you ask Canadians if they support legislation to reduce crime, of course they will say they support it. What are the facts?

This weekend I listened to a presentation by Brian Evans in Alberta and he made it very clear how the questions that are asked can determine the answers. He was quite open about showing the fallacies of the polling system. Again I remind the minister that John Diefenbaker probably stated best what polls are for.

What would Canadians say if we asked some of the following questions: First, do you believe that Canadians who do not register their guns should be subject to up to 10 years in prison, according to section 92 of the legislation? This means that a hunter who does not register his guns could be locked away for as long as multiple murderer, Denis Lortie, 10 years. How can this sort of extreme be justified?

Second, do you believe it is fair that under new rules allowing police to search for unregistered guns, all persons who do not "give the police officer all reasonable assistance" can be found guilty of an indictable offence and liable for a prison term of up to two years? This means that a farmer's wife who does not help the police to convict her husband by co-operating in a search for unregistered guns could be locked away for two years. Again this absolutely unbelievable.

Third, do you believe that the government should spend at least \$85 million to institute universal firearms registration? Of course the estimates go up into the hundreds of millions, depending on who you talk to. There is no evidence that this will reduce crime. When similar systems were tried in other countries they failed miserably.

The devil is in the details. When Bill C-68 is viewed in the light of these types of questions, we see how flawed this legislation is. In the justice minister's attempt to crack down on legitimate gun owners he is doing a fundamental disservice to all Canadians. Parliament cannot allow this to happen.

• (1245)

The motion proposed by the member for Yorkton—Melville gives us an invaluable opportunity to get back on the right track and refocus our efforts on crime control which is the real issue in the eyes of Canadians. If we do this, then I am certain we will have all-party support for those measures that increase penalties for criminals. On the other hand, when it comes to universal firearms registration, splitting the bill will allow us to approach this debate in a direct way. If members of the House support the proposed motion, then maybe we will really see what the level of support for the minister's universal firearms registration plan is.