

Measures Against Crime

will have to apply different standards in different parts of the country. That is something we have to recognize.

I am disappointed in another area. One of the recommendations continually made by firearms groups such as the B.C. Wildlife Federation and the Canadian Wildlife Federation is on the question of mandatory competency tests and training prior to the issuance of a licence to purchase a rifle.

I examined the legislation carefully. I cannot see any provision whereby some form of training or competency testing is required. This is a fairly severe weakness in the gun control legislation. Our party will propose to amend this legislation in accordance with recommendations by groups like the Canadian Wildlife Federation and the B.C. Wildlife Federation to encourage the responsible use of weapons, and the training and competency tests that are so necessary.

There was a recommendation by the Canadian Wildlife Federation which I think is attractive and which, I am sorry to say, the government has not seen fit to adopt. That is with respect to delay in purchase. A person wanting to purchase a rifle can simply walk in and pick it up if he meets the ownership licensing provision. In some cases a tragedy could be averted if there were a 24 hour delay in delivery of the weapon, if a person has an illegal purpose for the weapon or is emotionally unstable at the time of purchase.

There are a number of areas where recommendations by the Wildlife Federation and people involved in shooting sports have not been adopted. I hope the government will take a second look at amendments this party will be proposing in those areas.

I am delighted, of course, that the legislation ends mail order sales of weapons.

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member might permit a question solely for the purpose of ensuring that the record is correct. I draw his attention to clause 106.8 of the provisions which allows the Solicitor General to enter into agreement to maximize the co-ordination with provincial laws relating to game hunting and firearm safety training.

● (2020)

Mr. Leggatt: There might be some provision for entering into agreements with provincial authorities, but it seems to me that the government could provide leadership in this area. There is nothing to prevent the federal government taking the lead in terms of competency tests. I don't see that there is any jurisdictional problem. It could have been set forth as one of the prerequisites in connection with the licensing provision. However, I appreciate that there is a capacity to enter upon agreements later under the provision to which the minister has referred. I understand from my respected friend from Regina-Lake Centre that the minister could do it under the migratory birds legislation.

In any event, in summary, though we have some reservations about the gun control legislation we think it is a useful first step. It does incorporate the major principles we have been seeking to incorporate, and it goes a good distance toward accommodating those interested in the shooting sports and the hunting field who are so concerned

[Mr. Leggatt.]

about the licensing of weapons. Licensing, it seems to me, is a small price to pay by those in the shooting sports who have a legitimate purpose in using these weapons. It is a routine arrangement and one which, I imagine, will be complied with in order to protect that sport and its respectability, while preventing those who should not have weapons from possessing them.

Before embarking on new legislation it is wise to take a look at legislation presently on the statute books. As things are now, a person can walk out of a mental hospital suffering from a paranoid delusion, buy a long-barrelled rifle and shoot whoever he is paranoid about. At present there is nothing to prevent such an occurrence. How many fatalities have resulted from these and similar circumstances?

We have been talking about statistics and, I admit, statistics can become boring. But over and over again I read in newspapers of homicides which, under this legislation, might have been prevented. Obviously it will not solve this problem. People will still be able to obtain weapons from the black market. Nevertheless there is a real chance that an unstable or emotionally disturbed person will be unable to obtain weapons. Some people ask, "Why don't you control the possession of knives?" Well, there is always a point at which one stops. They might as well ask why one is allowed to buy shoes or boots without a licence. After all, people are sometimes kicked to death. The fact is that the gun is the most dangerous weapon because it takes only the pressure of an index finger to cause death.

The statement that people kill people and that guns do not kill people does not stand up to serious examination. I could quote item after item in newspapers to illustrate the point I am making. Here is a heading, "Labourer kills wife, then self". This man had been under psychiatric care. Under this legislation he need not have had access to a weapon had the licensing officer been informed. Here is another heading, "Elderly Man kills Son-in-Law". This was the case of a senile person; the weapon he used would have been removed had the relevant information come to the attention of the licensing officer.

I read of another case where a man was shot to death after a dispute over the digging of worms, of all things. In a resulting argument one of the parties obtained a weapon and shot the other. The person was obviously emotionally disturbed; if there had been a history of instability the legislation we are considering might have prevented this homicide. There are, of course, the classic tragedies which occurred in Ottawa and Brampton involving two boys, both obviously unstable. One might argue over whether or not this legislation would have prevented those two incidents, but there is a clear chance that it might have done so. It is surely incumbent upon the House to try to reduce homicides and the price to pay, that is, an application to a licensing authority, is small indeed.

I wish to deal now with the subject of wire tapping. We fought this battle in 1973 and now we are back fighting it again. The Minister of Justice suggested that those who criticize the changes in the wire tapping bill are raising doubts about our police forces. I have not seen a bigger red herring in this House for a long time. Look at the report of a Law Reform Commission, a report which the government paid a great great deal of money to obtain; it is true hon.