

Measures Against Crime

He goes on to state, as to people being compelled to safeguard guns, that all these safeguards do is to stop an honest man. The crook will get at the guns even if they are chained down in the house. I think that drives home the point very dramatically—and this is what a staff inspector of one of our major police forces in Canada had to say. As far as the requirement of a licence to continue ownership of the privately owned six million long-runs in Canada is concerned, it will do nothing to prevent their use by criminals. Section 106.1, to which I referred in answer to the minister, places in the hands of petty officials broad arbitrary powers. The imposition of regulations to provide such additional information and documentation at the whim of the local registrar can only result in undue harassment. The fees for licensing can be exorbitant, given the intended principle of self-financing of the bureaucracy. We can see that a prohibitive licence fee could be tantamount to an outright prohibition of firearms to the average person. We will end up with only the rich being able to afford the luxury of owning a gun.

The broad scope of powers granted to the governor in council is not clearly defined to prevent back door regulations which could prescribe total gun registration and alter restricted classes of weapons to the prohibited class. This is possible under the broad, sweeping powers granted under this bill to the governor in council. The interpretation of "ammunition" is so broad as to include anything from a lead fishing-weight to a spent cartridge to an atom bomb. Surely that has to be an asinine description. If it is possible for me to drive down the street in my automobile with a spent cartridge in my car and subjected to being charged under this law, surely this bill is overextending in its powers.

The sections dealing with legal responsibility arising from the handling and storage of firearms is something else not clearly defined. Whose judgment will be used, and what constitutes a "careless manner" or "reasonable precaution"? Will this interpretation be left to the regulations, or will it be left to the discretion of the police officer? The same thing applies to section 101.

● (1710)

I think the appeal procedures are overly complex and do not really constitute an effective procedure. I believe that the major thrust of any firearms legislation should address itself to two things: first, to restricting the use of firearms by criminals; second, to developing proficiency standards which will ensure the safe handling of firearms by good citizens in order to prevent harm and injury to themselves as well as to their fellow citizens. This bill fails to include training, testing and certification. It fails to include any sort of proficiency or competence test. Therefore, one can only assume that this bill represents something less than a genuine desire to get at the real root of the problem but is content to mislead the public into believing that severe regulations and restrictions imposed upon gun owners will.

The gun legislation, as it is drawn up, is the product of a government removed from reality, perhaps assisted and abetted by idealistic philosophies of overeducated bureaucrats who insist on imposing their views and solutions upon what they see as an uninformed and irrational public. This condescending approach does not serve the purpose of curbing crime and violence. As a matter of fact, it does not

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

serve the best interests of society. If it is the sincere wish of this government to curb crime and violence, then I submit it should reconsider the proposals in this gun legislation and withdraw them or send this bill to committee for study before proceeding with second reading. That is the thrust of our motion and I support it as wholeheartedly and vigorously as I possibly can.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McCleave): The hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier).

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I must say at the beginning that it is very nice to see you back in the chair. Since I first came into the House of Commons I have always had great respect for the way in which you have handled yourself and for the patience and fairness you have shown. For these attributes, I think this House owes you a great deal of thanks.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, obviously we are at the second reading stage and we are studying the principle enunciated in Bill C-83, an Act for the better protection of Canadian society against perpetrators of violent and other crime.

Until now, the debate has given rise to many comments from concerned organizations particularly about some clauses of the bill and it has also allowed many hon. members to give their point of view.

I receive—and I suppose that goes for many members as well—comments from my constituents and organizations concerned about gun control. The provisions of Bill C-83 are aimed indeed at eliminating those who would misuse guns and at controlling the availability of guns without unfairly prejudicing the legitimate use of guns for hunting or other sports. Those provisions are also aimed at applying severe standards governing the safe and proper use of those guns. They are mainly aimed at diminishing the use of guns in criminal acts by imposing more severe and new penalties.

So it is important that all groups concerned be heard before the House pass this legislation. It is at the committee stage, Mr. Speaker, when this bill will be studied in depth, that associations, organizations and individuals will make an important contribution. They will be able to voice their reservations and offer positive suggestions concerning amendments.

[English]

When the bill is studied in committee we can hear some of these organizations, such as the Ontario Arms Collectors' Association, the National Firearms Association, L'Association de tir de Québec, the Firearms and Responsible Ownership Group, the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, and many other groups from which I have received representations. We should seek the full co-operation of all these organizations and all levels of government in establishing rules and regulations with regard to gun control. It is, therefore, very important, if we are to reach consensus,