

larly among aboriginal youth. To date the federal government has done virtually nothing to respond to the recommendations in this important and crucial report. The report indicated this issue has been before the government for more than 10 years.

If the federal government were truly interested in dealing with the issue of youth suicide it would respond in the affirmative to the recommendation of the royal commission report immediately.

It is a bit surprising the government says firearms registration is critical to the reduction of suicide and violence and yet at the same time is proposing a delay in the full registration process until the year 2003. Surely if the government were serious about this false contention and about the issue, if registration were actually important to the reduction of suicide and violence, would it not make compulsory registration immediate?

Why wait eight years if this is so important? The answer is simple. There is no evidence to support the government's claims. Registration is not important to the reduction of suicide and violence, and the government knows it.

I also support the police dealing with real criminals in our society. I have no trouble accepting the argument that those who commit crimes against the rest of society must be sought out, convicted and punished. However, I must remind the House and the minister that every police officer from northwest Saskatchewan I have spoken to and all the police officers I deal with on a regular basis in my own constituency tell me registration is not the answer for them.

When they are called to a domestic dispute or a location where they are uncertain what they might find when they arrive, they already assume every home they visit has a firearm. They already take no chances when they visit a scene. The bill gives them no additional security in this regard.

The police tell me that anyone who will shoot them is as likely to use an illegal weapon as a registered firearm. The police in northwest Saskatchewan tell me they need more time in the field, better support services and more sustained opportunity to work on preventative community strategies. There is a need to work on programs that will help them prevent violence rather than programs that respond only once violence has been committed. The bill and government comments to that effect offer no hope that this is being contemplated by the government.

If I had more time today I would happily put more concerns on the record. Fortunately a few members in the House have already begun to do so. Rather, I stress I remain critical of this legislation. I am critical because the Liberals have set out an agenda that they say will deal with safety and security and they are asking the residents of my constituency who happen to own

legal and useful firearms to pay for them through the registration system.

The government is doing this without offering any evidence that any part of its plan will work any better than existing rules which have not yet been fully evaluated. I find this wrong and to a certain extent shameful politics.

I have already demonstrated that I do support firearms control measures that have a real and meaningful impact on our nation and its citizens. As I said earlier, while there is a role for legitimate critique of Bill C-68 and the critique of the false hope the Liberals are setting up with its passage, I trust the nation, the House and especially the minister will not only allow room for that critique to be articulated but also will take it to heart.

**Mr. Russell MacLellan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the bill today. It is very significant that we are in the House talking about this subject at a time which I see as one of the last few periods when we can make this kind of significant change to our gun control laws.

We are looking at the type of society in which we want to live.

• (1620)

The Minister of Justice has brought forward legislation on young offenders and sentencing. He has made a commitment to make changes to the dangerous offender laws and we have before us today the bill on gun control.

I do not want to criticize because I am a very big supporter and fan of our neighbours to the south. However, we have seen a situation there in which citizens who want to change the law cannot. We have seen a situation in which the number of deaths by firearms has escalated to totally catastrophic levels.

In 1992 in the United States, 35,000 people died as a result of firearms; 150,000 people wounded by firearms in the same year. That is alarming. Those who were wounded might have been killed at that time if infrared spotting devices were available. They are now available in the United States, giving greater accuracy in dark areas, at night and to those who really do not have proficiency in the use of firearms to have good aim.

We have been told the United States is different. We have been told this because of the second amendment to the Constitution of the United States. We have been told there is a constitutional right to bear arms in the United States. That is not correct in the sense the National Rifle Association in the United States would have us believe.

The right to bear arms as defined by the Supreme Court of the United States applies to the militias and the constabularies of the states to be able to arm themselves to defend against a national army. That is the basis as interpreted by the Supreme