

Private Members' Business

can be improved upon, and it will be improved upon by Bill C-80.

• (1730)

Also, the law restricts access to persons under the age of 16, except in cases where the child is under the supervision of an adult or in a few cases where the gun is a necessary part of the hunting or trapping life of that family. We do have restrictions and we do have a system in this country that is probably the best in the western world.

Firearms that are more likely to be used in crime are subject to even more restrictions. Handguns have to be registered with the RCMP and require special possession permits. Machine guns, sawed-off rifles, and shotguns are strictly prohibited, period.

Special offences and sentencing powers are in place to provide additional punishment for those who violate gun control laws or use firearms to commit other crimes.

Those are just some of the provisions within our existing legislation which make our legislation different from that of the country to the south that the hon. member mentioned in his remarks. There is a big difference. I do not think we can sensationalize this issue and I do not think we should, but there is a marked difference between the system we have and the system it has.

We must remind ourselves that from time to time our system has to be reviewed. I do not argue that. That is exactly what we are doing in Bill C-80.

Some of the amendments the member for Ottawa South is putting forward are worth examination. Let us take a look at those. One of his amendments would require applicants for a firearms acquisition certificate to establish that they have a safe place to store a gun. No one would argue with that.

To drive home the importance of a safe storage area for a gun, the other evening on the radio a young father was interviewed, 25 years old or so, whose little 3-year old boy was accidentally shot by the father through the mishandling of a gun in their own home. The first thing he mentioned was the safe storage of guns. No one would argue with that. It is reasonable.

The member also mentioned the increase in the licensing fee, the FAC, to \$100 per certificate. I think that \$100 is an unreasonable amount if we look at a cross-section of the country and areas in rural parts of New Brunswick and of Ontario that are using guns for hunting and in trapping situations. There are still a few trappers left in this country.

Under the new system the member would propose, it would mean to a gun collector a \$100 fee for each transaction. It is putting restrictions on bona fide gun collectors. I think that is most unreasonable. His system would also require a new FAC on every purchase made. Under Bill C-80—and if the amendments the member brought forward became part of this bill—we would have a 28-day waiting period for each and every acquisition along with the \$100 fee; most unreasonable.

Our present system is not to deter gun owners, but to screen out and deter only those who should not have access to guns for reasons of their own safety or the safety of others. That is what we have to attempt to do, and that is what we will do within Bill C-80.

The value of this debate and the value of some of the amendments that the hon. member for Ottawa South makes will come out in the legislative hearings on Bill C-80. It would be right if the member would bring those forward so that we could openly discuss, debate and modify some of his suggestions. None of us will argue with a safer gun law in this country.

Some of the hon. member's proposals can fit into our existing system but some clearly cannot. For that reason I cannot support his bill, and I urge my colleagues in the House to reject his amendments as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise this afternoon to support the motion put forward by my colleague from Ottawa South requesting that Bill C-273 be adopted.

There are serious questions we have to ask ourselves in this country. Why is it easier to buy a gun than a case of beer in Canada? For instance, a 17-year old Canadian can apply for a firearm acquisition certificate without even asking his parent or another authority for their consent, as my hon. colleague from Ottawa South