

*Government Orders*

Prime Minister in his address at the end of the convention made a very strong commitment to gun control legislation.

I would like to quote his words: "I would like to thank the women's commission in particular for having tabled an excellent resolution and strengthening firearms legislation. I believe that there is no place for firearms on our streets or playgrounds and I believe that the time has come to put even stricter measures in place to achieve this goal. I will be asking my Minister of Justice to examine your resolution very closely and to draft tough gun control legislation. I hope we have the support of all parties for this tough gun control. I know the Bloc Quebecois supports gun control and Preston Manning and the Reform Party are certainly talking a lot about crimes. I hope they will support these restrictions because tough talk is easy. What Canadians want and what we must provide is tough action".

At this point I would like to pay special tribute to the Minister of Justice. He has been patient in an exemplary fashion. He has heard. He has listened. He has crossed Canada to hear groups that were for gun control legislation and those violently opposed to gun control legislation.

He has heard not only from police chiefs but from community groups, from sports and gun clubs and any number of citizens of Canada who felt one way or another about this legislation. Eventually the time comes when decisions have to be made.

I thank him for his courage, his tenacity, his perseverance in bringing forward Bill C-68. What is more important is that he has told us time and time again that this is only part of a much broader picture, that crime prevention is not ensured by gun control legislation alone, that several measures must be taken together so that there is a reversal of attitudes in our society so that crime does not continue to be the menace it is today in our streets, in our villages and in our towns.

The whole crime prevention package is far broader than gun control legislation. It includes sentencing reform. It includes corrections and parole reform. It includes, as we have done, amendments to the Young Offenders Act. It included a Canadian crime prevention council which was launched last year.

More important, it includes broad social reform. In our red book we have tried to portray a holistic approach to society, to social reform, because unless we prevent the social causes that are the very root of crime in our society we will never eradicate crime no matter what legislation we put forward, no matter how tough the legislation, no matter how tough the jail sentences.

We have to reverse attitudes, create a new type of society in which we eradicate the root causes of crime: poverty, lack of education, lack of opportunity. This is what we are doing to approach social questions in a holistic fashion so that there is not only the tough legislation on gun control and crime but also the addressing of the root causes that lead to crime.

• (1345)

The intention of Bill C-68 is not to penalize or hinder legitimate gun owners. Not at all. In fact it recognizes the legitimate right of gun owners to use them for sport or for their livelihood. It recognizes the treaty rights for aboriginal people in Canada. At the same time it does recognize a profound reality. That reality is very simple. Guns are lethal weapons and they kill.

In fact, some of the opponents of gun control have tried to portray this as an urban versus rural debate. I suggest it is not. In fact, statistics accumulated for the period between 1980 and 1989 showed that in those 10 years there were 63 per cent more deaths by guns in towns with a population of under 5,000 than in towns with a population of over 500,000. Therefore it is not a big city versus small city problem. It is a problem of the safe handling of guns.

Guns impact especially on the lives of women. In the case of violence against women 42 per cent of all acts of murder committed on women have been done with guns. Of those guns 80 per cent of them are rifles used by their owners to batter and murder their wives.

We have to do something about this. We have to attack the problem, certainly the long term problem, by looking at the root causes of the social evils of society. At the same time we have to take short term measures to ensure that crime does not pay and that guns will not kill.

*[Translation]*

I would like now to pay a special tribute to two young women I know well—especially one of them—, Heidi Rathjen and Wendy Cukier, two young women who quit lucrative jobs. Heidi Rathjen is an engineer. She is now working almost on a volunteer basis to achieve stronger legislation on gun control. Heidi Rathjen said recently in an interview: Had we had stricter legislation, Marc Lépine and Valery Fabrikant might not have been able to do what they did. Were there even a slight chance that stronger legislation would have prevented Marc Lépine and Valery Fabrikant and all the others who committed senseless, horrible crimes from doing so, then that legislation would have been worthwhile, a thousand, a hundred thousand times over.

Michael Hogben was one of the four individuals killed by Valery Fabrikant. Michael was one of my friends. I worked very closely with him at Concordia University. We worked together on the Esther Goldenberg lectures, and it was on the eve of these lectures, which Michael was to organize, as he always had in the past, that he was killed. I remember being at the Hogben apartment with Esther Goldenberg after his funeral. I remember seeing Mrs. Hogben there, whom I had not met before, and the two young Hogben girls, and thinking that a scholarly person, a person with so much to give to society, not only erudite but a person of character, exceptionally high-minded, well-liked by everyone, his students and colleagues, was killed in the prime of