

*Criminal Code*

Moreover, Mr. Justice Lazure said, a few years ago, that 75 per cent of crimes are committed with firearms, and this single remark could justify the remarks which are about to follow.

From those statistics, one could draw a lesson which can be summarized thus: prevention is better than cure.

Prevention in the field which concerns me would be a complete revision of the Criminal Code as far as importation, production, sale, purchase and possession of firearms are concerned.

This motion, Mr. Speaker, does not pretend to settle all the problems in that field. Before translating it into definite legislation, all persons concerned and all experts should be called upon to express their opinions: police chiefs, attorneys general, rifle clubs fish and game associations, collectors, manufacturers and dealers. However, this is a start since I am asking the government to control firearms from importation or manufacture to final sale.

The act which should normally follow this motion should restrict the use of firearms, which is much too free now, by setting up a systematic control, not only over the sale and purchase of firearms, as I said a while ago, but also over their manufacture and repair.

The act could and should provide that whoever has firearms in his possession should have a licence and that whoever manufactures, repairs, purchases or sells firearms, wholesale or retail, in Canada or on foreign markets, must keep proper and complete records of all operations concerning those firearms.

This motion will, I trust, draw the attention of the public on the problem. I hope that to help me in the task, intermediary bodies, newspapers, radio and television stations, in one word, all information media will also draw the public attention on this urgent and complex problem. It requires the full co-operation of all levels of government, the population, the police forces and the financial institutions.

Already in 1960, the federal government proceeded here with the consideration of the problem of firearms. A non official committee was entrusted with considering the provision of the Criminal Code concerning firearms; that committee was composed of representatives of the legal branch of the Department of Justice, the Department of National Revenue, the R.C.M.P. and the Canadian

[Mr. Leblanc (Laurier).]

Association of Police Chiefs. It considered the matter with great care but the department did not proceed with certain recommendations because opinions were divided and, in some cases, contradictory. It has now been inactive since fall 1963.

But as this committee could not agree and reach majority conclusions and since this is a complex, huge, important and urgent problem, I think it would be better to set up a special committee of the house to deal with it, as was done in the case of the committees on pensions and the flag.

As I mentioned earlier, this committee could call as witnesses experts and representatives of public bodies interested in this ticklish subject, such as members of the Wildlife Federation, representatives of hunting, fishing and shooting clubs, collectors of ancient weapons, representatives of the law at all levels of government, law enforcement officers, weapon manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers, customs officers and prison wardens. The report of this committee could serve as the basis of a bill concerning sections of the Criminal Code dealing with firearms.

I think the federal government should seriously consider the restriction of the right of any citizen to possess or use firearms and the amendment of sections of the Criminal Code dealing with the control of firearms. The press and justices of assize courts as well as magistrates of police courts are complaining against the fact that practically anybody, even very young persons, can today purchase firearms. Public opinion has been aroused and people request that concrete steps should be taken to limit the right to own firearms and that it should be made more difficult to obtain permits.

The rate of crimes involving armed aggression which I mentioned earlier shows that criminals can too readily secure firearms without abiding by regulations, that is the Criminal Code or the Customs Act. This can be explained by four factors.

First of all, there are thefts in stores selling firearms and there have been thefts in barracks. There is also the illegal importation of firearms from the United States where the firearms business has even a freer hand than in Canada. Incidentally, I was pleased to learn through the press that senator Thomas Dodd's committee has been doing a tremendous job in urging the American government to exercise a strict control over firearms.

There is also a lack of control in the sale of firearms from the wholesaler to the retailer