

Firearms Control

that there were that many weapons traded each year since that time.

In 1979, for instance, there was a six months' backlog in the processing of applications to acquire firearm acquisition certificates. Presumably these have been cleared up, but a veil of secrecy has been drawn and a great deal of non-information has been coming out of the Department of the Solicitor General with respect to the time it now takes to obtain the certificates. I ask whoever will be replying for the government today how long a person has to wait for a certificate to be issued to him, provided he has no criminal record or no record of violent disorders. The National Advisory Council on Firearms was asked by the Department of the Solicitor General to provide independent advice on the program to the government. Is it still in existence, and where are the reports? Why have we not heard the concerns of this group? A veil of secrecy has been drawn over the whole matter of gun control registration in the last little while, and it is time that many of these concerns were answered.

I suspect that there is a great number of problems regarding administration, and I suspect that there is a great number of suggested amendments to the legislation which are ready to be processed through the House. Yet we have heard absolutely nothing about them. By the middle of 1979, without any of the confirming statistics which have since become available to the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan), 13 amendments to the legislation were identified as being needed. Here we are well into 1981 and nothing has been forthcoming, no statement, no statistics. For instance, some of the amendments identified well over a year and a half ago included such matters as safety training requirements under the act. Surely if we are going to be burdened with this type of legislation there should be an objective in view with regard to the acquisition of new weapons in this country by individuals, and some requirements with regard to safety training. This whole aspect has been ignored by the government. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that amendments with respect to that aspect have been ready for some time now.

Another real problem has been the whole matter relating to security firms in this country. An FAC is issued to an individual, not to a company. Most security firms require the ownership and use of a weapon, which is unfortunate, in my view. It is not possible, as has been suggested to this government by provincial governments, for some type of a blanket permit to be issued to these security firms?

Customs tariff amendments have been ready for some time as they relate to the importation into this country of firearms by Canadian citizens, but absolutely nothing has been brought forward regarding this by the government. Then there is the matter of dealing with non-residents who attempt to import weapons temporarily into this country without an FAC. This matter has not been tackled at all. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that this is a very real and continuing problem to the tourist industry in this country in so far as American hunters are concerned. No matter who is involved, a certificate is required in this country for anyone carrying a gun.

What do Americans do who bring guns across the border temporarily? Do they apply for an FAC? If they apply for an FAC, do the police forces in the country check their medical records or their violent tendencies, if any? I suggest that a double standard is being applied with regard to Americans who come in and Canadian citizens. I am not even sure that the government is enforcing these provisions of the act. All this is a can of worms. If it did enforce them, there would be a great anguished outcry from the tourist outfitters and from the whole tourist industry in the country. In many ways the government has shut its eyes with regard to the problem of non-residents who bring their weapons into this country temporarily for a lawful purpose.

Then there is the whole question of appeals, another matter which has to be dealt with. There is simply no appeal provision in the act at the moment with regard to those who are denied a free firearm acquisition certificate. There are other questions and other procedural problems in respect of the legislation regarding appeals. That is another area which should be considered very carefully by a parliamentary committee, I suggest. More problems have surfaced now since the first phase of that legislation was proclaimed on January 1, 1978.

The time for a complete review of the administration of the act is now long overdue and should be dealt with as promptly as possible. The proper body to deal with it is a parliamentary committee. The whole purpose of the legislation, the whole philosophy and the whole concept behind it, are to reduce the number of crimes committed with guns in Canada, and after two full years since the legislation was passed a valid question should be asked by all of us. The question is whether this legislation is achieving that purpose. I must say to you, sir, that I have grave doubts that it is. It seems to me to be a cumbersome, awkward, and expensive system. But I would like to know for sure. I would like to learn from those who must enforce it and from those who have a very expert and detailed knowledge of it.

● (1720)

The first two annual firearms reports—the only ones we have ever received—for 1977 and 1978 do not reveal any evident trend toward a sharp reduction in the violent crime rate. The statistics for early 1980, which we now have, show that violent crime, crime connected to guns, is on the upsurge in this country. Just last week the report of the Metropolitan Toronto Police Commission for 1980 was released. For instance, in metro-Toronto alone crime is up 9.4 per cent, most of which is violent crime. In the city of Toronto during 1980 ten citizens were killed during acts of robbery, compared to only one in 1979. Out of a total of 48 homicides last year in metro-Toronto, 18 people were shot to death. Robberies with firearms increased 23 per cent in metro-Toronto in 1980—386 in 1980 compared to 289 in 1979.

I end by saying this to you, Mr. Speaker. The Trudeau government in 1979 made a public commitment to carry out a review of the firearms control provisions of the Criminal Code. It was never done by the previous Liberal administration. The