

Government Orders

The first nationwide permit system was introduced in 1892, the registration of handguns in 1932.

Of 1.2 million handguns registered to 560,000 Canadians, only 10 per cent have applied for a permit which allows for transportation of a handgun to and from a shooting club. Canadians are apparently more interested in owning than in using these firearms.

The registration of 5.8 million firearms will be phased in over seven years. Frankly, the tired old argument that registration failed in New Zealand does not hold. Modern computer technology will make this task efficient, simple and cost effective. We routinely register automobiles, mortgages, driver's licences, building permits and dogs. To argue that a national registration system would be onerous is to ignore the electronic advancement of our generation.

Registration should not pose any threat to legitimate, responsible gun owners. In fact, they should welcome it. Only the most paranoid of individuals have expressed the fear that big brother is watching.

In reality, orderly registration will deter theft and smuggling and will assist police. Ultimately, registration will bring the responsible gun owner into a partnership with the enforcement agencies. It will be a partnership based on trust, competence, access to information and accountability.

I know much has been said of the opposition to this legislation. Change is not always easy to accept. We live in an increasingly hostile and violent society. We cannot abandon it to the spiral of violence that will fundamentally change Canada for generations to come. We must take the strongest and most effective measures possible to respond to those of us who want a peaceful, safe and tolerant society.

My colleague from across the floor, the hon. member for Calgary Centre recently said in the House that if you identify your problem correctly, 60 per cent of your solution is before you. I believe Canadians have identified the problem. This legislation is an effective and necessary beginning, moving us well on the way to a 100 per cent solution.

It is a great honour for me to speak today. I have had a rather motley political career because I have always been labelled an idealist. Sometimes things happen in politics because it is doable rather than because it is right. I am very proud of our minister and to be part of this Liberal government because I believe today we are doing what is right.

• (1600)

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some moments ago the House received a motion asking that the bill not be read the second time.

I want to submit very briefly that it is my feeling, and I am sure that of many hon. members, that this motion is out of order because it does not state that it is against the principle of the bill, nor that the principle of the bill is defective. It does not address that issue.

It merely addresses the fact that because the bill deals with two separate issues we should not deal with it at that time. If the bill were dealing with two separate issues, the argument would be that the bill is omnibus or omnibus like, if you will, and that the Chair has consistently dealt with that issue in the past by agreeing that such legislation was in order. In any case, this bill would not be omnibus even if that argument were made.

The argument here has to do with two conflicting principles being in the bill and that being a justification for the substantive motion brought to the attention of the Chair. Those are not, in my submission, grounds that would enable a member to make the kind of motion which was brought to the floor of the House this afternoon.

Therefore I would ask the Chair to rule at the earliest opportunity that this particular motion is out of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair would appreciate hearing all representations on the validity of the motion and therefore I would call on the Reform Party to make submissions on the issue.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it was with a great deal of thought and consideration and also with a great deal of consultation with the legal counsel of the House that we did present this amendment to the motion being debated before us today. Very simply the wording is:

That all the words after the word "that" be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

This House decline to give second reading to Bill C-68, an act respecting firearms and other weapons, because the principle of establishing a system for licensing and registration of all firearms and the principle of creating a variety of offences are two unrelated issues that should be addressed separately.

This is a reasoned amendment and we have been informed that according to the legislative counsel of this House it is in order. It is a reasoned amendment and therefore I would put to you, Mr. Speaker, that the amendment be allowed to stand.