

Government Orders

Crime is what we should be attacking here, not registration. Registration is not the answer. Therefore, let us split this bill in two and make sure that we deal with crime. As the bill is now responsible firearms owners are going to be labelled and become criminals.

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak on the motion. I have been spending the last few days listening to the debate on it.

I must say that some good ideas came from across the floor. Some good ideas also came from this side of the House of changes we could make to really reflect the concerns of some of my constituents.

Over the past few months I have been talking to a number of my constituents who have been hearing a lot of misinformation concerning this bill. It has been very difficult to really debate the bill in an open and meaningful way. I end up spending half of my time trying to explain to constituents parts of the bill that they believe are there but actually are not. I find that a very difficult way to deal with the legislation.

I have a number of concerns with the legislation but before I get into that I want to talk about those areas which I think everyone in the House supports. When Bill C-17 came into the House under the former Conservative government I could not support and voted against the sections on the increased criminal sanctions for the illegal use of firearms. One of the reasons I voted against the bill was that I did not believe it dealt with the criminal use of guns. My constituents did not feel these issues were properly dealt with.

• (1705)

I brought those points forward and I want to thank the minister for at least listening to Canadians who felt there was not enough being done to sanction people who use guns in the commission of crimes. I appreciate that he and the Prime Minister are taking our ideas and moving forward with them.

As members know, the average sanction across the board is about 16 months. The minister has increased it to four years. I would rather have seen it go higher but I see that as a positive step and a good way forward.

I also agree with what the minister is doing with the whole question of smuggling. I have talked with the Minister of National Revenue and he has indicated to me that he, along with the Solicitor General and the Minister of Justice, have a task force together. They are going to focus on smuggling.

This will not work unless smugglers are stopped at the border. There is one major place at the border where the majority of these guns are coming across. I call on the Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General to deal with that situation and to get the guns off the street. I also agree with the seizure of the assets

of those people who smuggle. If assets are seized and smuggling is stopped it will go a long way in dealing with some of the problems.

I have not heard anybody on the other side thank the minister for dealing with the whole situation of young offenders with regard to handguns. I see that as a positive step forward and something we could support.

I want to get into those areas that I feel are not very well represented. Specifically, there is the whole area of registration. It is probably the area that concerns most of my constituents. When I was putting forward proposals on that, I always said that registration would have to be proven to me to be effective, efficient and affordable. When I look at some of the proposals put forward by the minister, I am concerned whether they actually meet that criteria.

I hope the members of the committee on justice will tear the bill apart, get the minister before them and get the proof whether these sorts of criteria are met. I see that as an important role of the committee and I hope it will take that challenge on.

I also wanted to split the bill. A lot of members wanted to split the bill but I have to say to my colleagues across the way that their motion does not split the bill.

Miss Grey: Make a motion.

Mr. Speller: I will make a motion. I wonder if I can have unanimous consent to move this motion. I move:

That section 80 on page 36 through to section 112 on page 51 could be removed from this bill and brought back as another bill under the name of the Canadian firearms registration system.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the member have unanimous consent to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is not unanimous consent. The member has the floor on debate.

Mr. Stinson: A Liberal said no.

Mr. Speller: Mr. Speaker, a number of members on all sides of the House would support a motion like that. I hope that maybe we can work as this bill goes through its other stages to convince the minister to do something like that.

Miss Grey: Absolutely.

Mr. Speller: Mr. Speaker, I notice that you gave our hon. colleague a going over for heckling before.

The Deputy Speaker: The member has a good point. As the member for Beaver River will agree, I asked the member not to heckle her. I wonder if members on the Reform side would not heckle the member.