

with a lethal weapon instead of a baseball bat. Of course it is possible to kill people with poison, a knife or a baseball bat, but a gun is manufactured to kill, to kill animals or to kill people. Guns should be controlled and this bill will give better control.

• (1715)

With respect to registration, previous speakers, especially those from the Reform Party, asked how it will protect society and why we are doing it. We have had registration in this country for many years. Restricted weapons, especially handguns, have been registered for a long period of time and it has been successful. The rate of crime with handguns in Canada has, for the most part, been much lower than the rate of crime with long guns because handguns have been much more strictly controlled.

With the registration of all weapons, including handguns and long guns, it will be easier to conduct criminal investigations. The police will know who have guns and who do not. It will be easier to trace weapons used in crime and the criminals who had access to those guns. It will be easier to take preventive measures against violence with guns. For example, in a family that has a history of family violence, the police will know whether the husband or another family member has a gun registered in their name and that gun could be taken away.

It is true as some who oppose this bill will say that not everyone will register their gun. However, a large number will. Such a measure will help the police to remove guns from dangerous situations, especially situations where there has been a record of family violence.

With respect to the ban on most handguns, that is, handguns that are not used for competitive shooting, handguns such as the Saturday night specials, the very small and very easy to conceal handguns, these have no purpose except for use in crime. If someone is actually taking part in competitive shooting, then the gun is registered; the person belongs to a gun club and that is permissible. The other types of handguns which are very small and are not used in competitive shooting will be banned under the legislation and they should be banned.

The bill provides for an increase in the penalties for the misuse of guns, for the smuggling of guns and for the illegal sale of guns and ammunition. I support that but I do not believe that increased penalties are the answer. Increased penalties deal with the situation after it has taken place. The crime has been committed. Someone is dead. They have found the criminal and they will give them a stiffer penalty.

What we are trying to do with this legislation is to prevent the crime from taking place in the first place. We are trying to make guns more difficult to obtain and to screen the applicants who

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want to own guns. Doing that will prevent the crimes from taking place. It is a preventive measure.

To rely simply on long, tough, hard penalties as is done in most of the United States does not work. They have absolutely no effect whatsoever. The crime rates with guns are much higher there than they are in Canada, especially in Louisiana, Texas, Florida, Alabama and Mississippi.

In conclusion, I assure the House that as chair of the standing committee on justice, despite my strong views in favour of this bill, I intend to be absolutely fair with all sides who take part in the discussion before the committee. I want to assure those who oppose the bill that they will be fairly treated. Those who wish to amend the bill will be fairly treated. Those who support the bill will be fairly treated.

When I act as chair of the committee the most important aspect is the tradition of Parliament of the rights of minorities to have their say. I want to assure all members of this House and the general public that as chair of the justice committee everyone will be given their full right to be heard.

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take part in the debate on Bill C-68. I hope the Minister of Justice is listening to the constructive suggestions which have been advanced in this debate. My colleagues on this side of the House have put forward ideas and suggestions which would make parts of this bill much better. However, we strongly oppose one part of the bill.

• (1720)

Today I want to address mainly the part on a national firearms registration system. I hope when we get into final debate on it that those on the government side who oppose the clauses that establish the regime of gun registration will stand with us to defeat those sections. If this were to happen it would be a great day for freedom in this Parliament and a great day for individual freedom in all parts of Canada.

I have spent most of my adult life in the teaching profession. One thing about teaching is that in order to explain something to others, it is essential to understand it yourself. For me, that means getting back to basics.

Therefore when I analyse legislation I ask myself: What is the problem the legislation is attempting to address or to cure? Once I am able to discern what the problem is, then I can go through the legislation clause by clause to see if the problem is being addressed correctly. This methodology seems to work most of the time. When it does not work, it usually is because I see the problem as advanced by the government in different terms than the government does and then can address it quite differently.