

Measures Against Crime

The recall program, again in terms of proliferation, is important. I am pleased that in both Brampton and Ottawa, where the two tragedies have occurred, police forces in both those municipalities are setting up a program so that people can bring guns to them and they will destroy them without any questions.

I do not need to pursue the provisions that will be or are set out for the licensing or legal responsibility. However, I think the legal responsibility is very important. Surely if a person owns a gun he should accept responsibility for the use of that gun while it is under his ownership.

● (2040)

I should like to conclude by making one or two comments concerning the objections raised by some hon. members and shared by sports clubs, rifle owners, and hunters. The basic argument they put forward is that there is really no need for Bill C-83 to involve long guns. When this question was previously discussed many people proposed that individual guns should be registered. Hon. members will note that the bill before us does not propose to follow this course. Instead, the people who own the guns are to be registered.

Many concerned citizens have written to me suggesting a central storage should be set up where all guns would be located; a person wanting to use his gun would have to go there to get it out, and return it there after use. Such a provision was not put into the bill, for good reason, nor was the extreme provision of making the ownership of firearms illegal. Some of the legitimate concerns felt by sportsmen and hunters have been answered inasmuch as those provisions I have mentioned are not in the bill.

The statistics with regard to the relationship between the use of long guns and crime are interesting. For instance, rifles are used in about two thirds of all domestic shootings, which indicates that the need for secure storage of such weapons within the home is important. Rifles were used in well over half of all murders committed between 1961 and 1974. Without doubt, rifles and shotguns are used in the majority of accidental shootings which occur. This would lead to the conclusion that to ignore the need to supervise the use and ownership of long barrelled weapons would be a failure to address ourselves to a large proportion of related incidents, particularly those of a passionate nature involving family, friends, and innocent bystanders. Rifle owners must accept responsibility to stem the misuse of their weapons; they must accept the requirement that all rifle and shotgun owners be duly licensed.

The provisions having to do with the confiscation of firearms will be set out in detail in the regulations. I know there are many who wish that all the regulations could somehow be incorporated into the bill. I do not think there need be any real concern on this score because any regulations which are published will have to go before the appropriate committee. This will provide an open forum at which anyone may review the progress which is made there.

I should also like to deal with the criticism that intervention by the government represents an unconscionable violation of civil liberties. I find it difficult to accept this proposition. I do not think any inherent legal right exists in common law in this country which guarantees free

ownership of weapons. It is, however, an irrefutable responsibility of government to provide for the peace and security of citizens while respecting fundamental civil rights, and while providing equitable appeal procedures from any of its decisions or actions.

From the very beginning of this country's history we have always vested responsibility for personal and private security with the police forces. If anything disturbs me, it is the recent trend of people purchasing firearms for their own safety. The greatest hazard in following this practice is to the purchasers themselves, because I believe more people end up victims of gun incidents than would ever need to use them in the circumstances they have envisaged. I often wonder why sportsmen in the gun clubs do not show leadership in talking about gun safety and providing education in the use of guns. If there is any threat to their continuing ability to own guns it is simply the recent tide of public opinion against guns in private hands.

Many people are asking whether this legislation will be, or can be, effective. I would draw attention to the situation in Japan where the law, in effect, prohibits private gun ownership and prescribes a strict five-year penalty for possession. Last year in Japan, where there is a population of 100 million, there were 37 homicides involving the use of firearms. That is about equal to the number in Toronto last year, a city which has a population of about 2.5 million. So Japan has about 1/40th of the gun crime rate that Toronto has. I say this to back up my point that gun legislation can be effective in cutting down crime.

I conclude by calling on members in all parties to support the reference of this legislation to committee. I know there are many groups of people who wish to appear before the committee to express their points of view, and that is fine. But we ought to send the bill to committee as quickly as we can so that we can hear these various points of view and evaluate them thoroughly.

[Translation]

Mr. Charles-Eugène Dionne (Kamouraska): Mr. Speaker, the bill now under discussion recommends the adoption of legislation to provide better protection for the Canadian people against violent and other crimes. In the recommendation to the House I read provide that, quote:

to increase the number of members of the National Parole Board to not less than twenty-six members . . .

Like most legislation introduced in this House, this bill is worded in a very intricate way and if enacted, the implementation procedure would cause delays and hitches in the enforcement of the law.

We all know that many Canadian sportsmen who possess hunting-guns might be searched by officials empowered by law to do so, even if it could be proven that the firearms which they own are used only for shooting during the hunting season.

Obviously criminals will not bother to check whether their guns are registered or not when they decide to use them for any theft or crime. As a result of interviews with many people from my region, I found out they were far from being in favour of these new controls. For instance, a gun collector wrote me a letter dated March 22, 1976 after