

congressmen and senators. I am also aware of the letters that they send out to their members, which under the name of any other organization would be regarded as hate literature — so much so that, as you may recall, President Bush resigned from that organization.

I have seen their buttons — they corrupt teenagers by selling them buttons that say: “Yes, you may take my gun when you tear it from my cold, dead fingers.”

What a fraud! I consider the National Rifle Association to be almost an evil organization. However, I am not captive to their ideas simply because I oppose the fraud that is being perpetrated on Canadians with this bill.

A couple of incidents have had some influence on my thinking: A female public official in British Columbia told me to go back to Ottawa and tell the government to improve the legislation by banning all guns with the exception of police arms. I asked what she would have me tell natives and hunters who hunt for survival, and who feed themselves and their families on animals that they kill with guns? She said to tell them to get their meat at Safeway, the same as the rest of us.

Have we advanced very far in 200 years? Is that any worse or any better than “Let them eat cake”?

We had another incident in my “backyard” of British Columbia involving animal rights protectors. A number of mink farms operate in the Fraser Valley, where Senator St. Germain and I come from. On the mistaken assumption that these animals were being harvested with guns, in the dark of night 10 or 12 people turned thousands of the animals loose. Fortunately, about 80 per cent of the animals were recovered. Of the other few hundred, some were killed on the highways in traffic. Those that made it across the road would die an agonizing death from starvation, because those animals are domesticated, and cannot fend for themselves. One of the animal activists remarked: “Better that kind of death than to be living in a cage.”

These are economic terrorists of the worst kind. They are misguided, and without any regard for the economic damage done to the farmers who are trying to make an honest living. You can almost forgive that kind of ignorance. I really must ask, though: What is Allan Rock’s excuse?

We have all had thousands of letters and form letters. Setting aside the form letters, we received from legitimate Canadians 2,380 letters: 197 agreed with the bill, and 2,183 were against. From my own province, I received 1,320 individual letters: 34 were in favour of the bill, and 1,286 were against. That had some influence when taken with my own experience and my views of the bill.

I was pleased to join with my colleague from British Columbia, Senator St. Germain, as well as Senators Ghitter,

Tkachuk, Carney and Lucier, at the hearings in Vancouver and Kamloops. We sat for a full day in both communities. Almost every group began by saying: “Finally, here is the Senate performing its function, hearing from ordinary people, and associations, and protecting regional interests.” They had been denied the opportunity because of logistics, or because of the numbers of people wishing to appear before the Senate committee in Ottawa, or because they could not reach Allan Rock, but this was their chance. Almost without exception, they prefaced their presentations with applause for the Senate.

I would like to add my applause to the Conservative senators who took the initiatives in holding these hearings. I was pleased to join with them to hear from ordinary Canadians in Vancouver and in Kamloops.

What did these ordinary Canadians tell us? My friend Senator Sparrow made an amendment which I seconded, and which I support. He talked about hunters and ranchers, and really made the case for city versus country. That is what this bill is all about. Why do we not have a city bill and a country bill? We heard today about how Senator Sparrow, as a rancher, deals with predators.

We do not have capital punishment in Canada; we have not had it for years, with one exception: On the farms and ranches of Canada, we still have capital punishment. If a predator steals a chicken, or kills a sheep or a cow, he must pay the ultimate price.

I do not know how many of you have had the experience of dealing with predators. I am a farmer. If you do not have your ammunition in that gun, and if you do not have the gun cocked and the safety off before you step out from the barn or the house, and that predator hears that click, you will never get a shot. These are simple, practical facts about the reality of what happens on farms and ranches.

In California, Governor Wilson ran for re-election on the platform that the economy and the environment were compatible. He said he had to do this because, in southern California, there are many sheep ranchers. He said that the old farmer who had been around for a long time, on seeing his sheep attacked by coyotes, would, like his father and grandfather before him, take out his rifle and chase down the predators.

Under the new system, along comes the environmental officer to tell the farmer he cannot do that. The farmer then asks how he is supposed to deal with predators, and the environmental officer replies, “Under the new system which allows you to get rid of your guns, we will follow the coyote to his lair and spray it to cause the coyote to lose its desire for sex.” The farmer then says, “Well, sonny, I don’t know what those coyotes do in the city, but out here in the country, they eat the sheep.” This is a country-versus-city issue. Those kinds of “cures” for these kind of problems simply do not work.