

Criminal Code

with alcohol and drug abuse. Those criteria exist right now for the firearms acquisition certificate. It would also provide for a cooling off period. For instance, if someone buys a gun today I believe it should take two or three weeks before that person receives a firearms acquisition certificate. During that period, very often the emotional circumstances will change. I am reminded of the famous case in Montreal last year. A woman by the name of Tadio killed her boyfriend whom she found fooling around. She went to buy a gun and was told at the gun store that she needed a firearms acquisition certificate. She received that certificate and the gun registration form within three hours. Obviously, the police did not do their job according to the legislation. She went to her boyfriend's place of work and shot him dead on the spot. That was the only crime she had ever committed. She obtained that gun because it was easy to get and she committed that crime because it was easy to carry out.

I want to make guns and ammunition less readily available. I know this Bill is not a panacea. It will not solve all of the problems but if we are able to reduce armed robberies by 100 or 200 a year out of the 800, we will accomplish something. I do not want in any way to prevent the legitimate hunter and sportsman from continuing their sport. We had outstanding success in olympic shooting. These people would easily pass the tests because they are balanced people with a good record in their communities. They would receive their certificate just as they would receive a driver's licence; just like pharmacists would receive licences to sell prescription drugs. We do not let anyone sell prescription drugs which are harmful. That is done by specialists who must have a licence. We should do at the least the same for the most dangerous consumer good on the market, that is the gun; that is the very least we can do.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Bernier (Beauce): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate and have this opportunity to give my views on Bill C-205.

In the spring and summer of 1976 and again at about the same time in 1977 the House of Commons experienced emotional moments which gave rise to controversy, particularly after the introduction of Criminal Code amendments concerning gun control. Finally, in July 1977, the House passed Bill C-51, the legislative measure I want to talk about this afternoon.

The legislation features several noteworthy provisions, including one on the issuance of firearms acquisition certificates for which the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East (Mr. Allmand) is now attempting to substitute firearms possession certificates. The legislation also marked the beginning of the firearms selling permit issuance system which makes it possible to ensure that retailers display, sell and store firearms in a cautious and responsible manner, and it also provides for stiffer penalties for those who use firearms for illegal purposes. Mr. Speaker, I should point out that the

courts are making even greater use of their powers with respect to penalties and interdictions, and that is as it should be if we want to prevent people from using firearms for criminal intents.

I would suggest that, as a result, the existing legislative measures related to gun control are adequate, and that their implementation does not create major problems nor lead to controversy. I am in favour of judicious gun control in Canada but, in my estimation, the Bill under consideration this afternoon is unreasonable and would prove to be an administrative nightmare for ordinary and responsible Canadians who own guns and, for instance, enjoy hunting. Not only does the Bill deal with firearms, but it provides as well that any person having ammunition without being the holder of a firearms possession certificate will be guilty of lawbreaking. Even the Liberal Government which shepherded the legislative measures we are expected to amend today did not see any point in controlling ammunition. Indeed, under one of the amendments proposed in Bill C-19 introduced during the previous session, ammunition dealers were to be exempt from the obligation to secure a firearms selling permit because, according to the Bill sponsor, such a measure would not serve any real purpose. Now, then, if Bill C-205 were adopted, some people could be hauled before the courts simply for having forgotten, for example, that they happen to have a box of cartridges at home. That is going a little too far.

Through his Bill, the Hon. Member wants to impose even stricter gun control in Canada. We did consider a similar measure during the previous session and, as I recall, the Hon. Member failed to rally the support of his own Party. Our Party then opposed this kind of legislation and nothing has changed since. My constituents are fully aware of gun controls and, in that field, most people do not want overly strict and perhaps overly cumbersome legislative measures.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Government has created a ministerial task force responsible for looking into each and every departmental program. This exercise will enable us to set up a program chart which at the same time will be simpler, better, clearer and more readily accessible to users. The Bill now before the House does not improve anything, nor does it meet the needs of the millions of firearms owners in Canada. Should this Bill ever become the law of the land, every single one of them would be directly involved in the administrative rigmarole advocated by the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East. Our Government has launched a genuine and practical reform of all its programs, but that does not mean the adoption of piecemeal measures.

The Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East (Mr. Allmand) believes that there are problems related to some of the provisions on gun control. He has therefore introduced a small Bill to deal with what seems most urgent. If another problem comes up, he will propose other band-aid solutions until the legislation is impossible to enforce. How-