

Criminal Code

time and it is adequate for our purposes. Therefore, I would ask that this House support my amendment.

● (1130)

I hope that the governor in council, in making use of subclause (d), will make the necessary arrangements, prior to enacting regulations, to have consultations with the various wildlife organizations and sporting groups so that they are aware of the weapons that are being restricted. I ask that hon. members support my amendment.

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I support the amendment of my colleague, the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil). I know a considerable number of people who own carbines. In fact, I have one myself which I received many years ago. I have not measured the barrel, but I suspect it is somewhat less and would probably fall into this category. It is hard to imagine it being more dangerous than any other weapon. In fact, if a weapon is longer than 18½ inches, it could be sawed-off by anyone who wished to use it as a criminal weapon.

As I understand the legislation, the government wants control over the M1 carbine. However, I believe that any weapon should be put into the pre-emptive weapon code by order in council. It should be placed there as a restricted weapon, rather than a blanket provision cutting out all guns that fall under this classification. To outlaw all of these guns is not the best way to approach this problem, particularly when vast numbers are already in the hands of people. This is a popular sporting weapon. Presumably, if you have a gun 19 inches in length, it would fall within the legal category. The carbine is an easy gun for a sportsman to carry. I have found it extremely easy to carry. It is a very popular gun. It is light, and it is good in dense bush.

If a particular weapon is being used extensively by criminals, the best way to deal with that problem would be through subclause (d). I strongly suspect there would then be more co-operation from the sporting groups. This could be publicized through wildlife groups which encompass almost everyone in the sporting field. It would be given wide publicity that it is a prohibited weapon. By taking the public more into its confidence, there would be a better law.

Mr. G. H. Whittaker (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to go on record as supporting the amendment of the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil). I have received many representations from constituents regarding the length of the gun barrel. I strongly support the hon. member's argument that in many instances, due to lack of accuracy of guns, one-quarter to one half-inch is taken off at the muzzle. This usually causes some damage at the muzzle. The best way for a gunsmith to repair the damage and the accuracy is to shorten the barrel, probably by less than one inch. That makes it an illegal weapon under this act. In most cases, these guns have been in the hands of the family for years. Immediately placing them on the restricted list will prove a hardship.

[Mr. Neil.]

This points out the whole scope of this type of regulation or law which the government of Canada tries to bring in that deal with gun control. It is very easy to bring forward such laws, but very difficult to make them do what they are supposed to do. Any law to control guns in Canada must be aimed at the criminal element. This is where the problem usually begins. The Liberal government is trying to bring in some kind of gun control that will control guns in the hands of people whom they believe should not have them. I do not know how they will be able to do that in a responsible manner. Those they are aiming at, people who use guns as weapons for their defence, in anger or other uses, will get these guns, at any rate, in one way or another. I agree with the hon. member for Moose Jaw that trying to control the M1 carbine should be done under subclause (d). It should not be done by taking away from responsible people in Canada something that they have not used in a criminal or irresponsible manner but have kept in good working condition.

When you look at the bill, you see that all the gun control is being done by regulation. It is all done by order in council. That is one reason so many people in Canada are up-tight about this bill. Nothing is really spelled out other than a few areas such as regulating the length of the barrel. I do not think we want to pass laws in this House that will make criminals out of people. It is very honourable to pass laws which attempt to control the criminal element—an element in Canada that needs a lot of control. It is unfortunate that we have them and that they have to be controlled. I do not really believe that we should be making laws that make criminals out of innocent people. I am referring to people who have cut down the length of the barrel of their guns to improve the accuracy of their shooting or to repair a damaged muzzle.

● (1140)

I know that it does not destroy a gun to shorten the length of the barrel but, rather, makes for more accurate shooting. We are talking here about changing a section so as to allow people to make changes to their M1 carbines, and I hope we will not pass this section as it stands, which would make criminals out of innocent people. Some people might not even know that such a law has been passed by the House of Commons in Ottawa and that their rifles are illegal under the new regulations. The barrel of the rifle could have been shortened years ago by someone in the family, and the gun handed down in the family. Suddenly, a regulation is passed in Ottawa and the fact that the gun had been shortened by a quarter of an inch, half an inch, or even one inch, makes the owner a criminal. We know what happens to people who are in trouble with the law.

The people we want to control are those who are deliberately out to break the law, who do not respect the law. There can be a larger number of rifles in the possession of innocent people who will find themselves in contravention of the law as a result of this section of the act. That is the reason I strongly support the amendment of the hon. member for Moose Jaw.

Mr. Alex Patterson (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a comment or two on this clause. I certainly