

Government Orders

The most obvious goal for me is preventing people from using a firearm to commit suicide. Often, access to a firearm is the definitive, deciding factor on the outcome of the situation. Although the Firearms Act will not directly help people who are contemplating suicide to deal with their crises, it will at least save some lives by barring access to firearms in cases where people are refused licences for justifiable reasons.

In conclusion, I believe that this law is not the best firearms bill we could have introduced, but that it is better than none at all. I want to ask those people who have been long-time regular users of firearms to calm down and consider what the actual impact will be on their daily lives.

As I said earlier, for three years there will be no impact as such. After that, a person has five years to register his firearm. We will have plenty of time to find out whether there will be any negative impact.

If firearms registration is done properly and if in eight, ten, fifteen or twenty years we as a society are able to show that our statistics on the number of accidents, the type of accidents and the number of suicides have gone down, then it will have been worthwhile. From this point of view, aside from the constraints on lawful users of firearms, I wish they would think about that other aspect and realize that, in the best interests of our society, it would be advisable to support this bill and provide for adequate supervision.

For instance, the amendments proposed by the Bloc Québécois, which were defeated, made provisions for Cabinet to use its regulatory authority with respect to aboriginal people. We need practical applications to ensure that the department is sympathetic to certain needs and to ensure that the bill passed in this House makes our society different from other societies where there is a lot more violence and, in the process, ensures that we have a quality of life and a social model that is far superior.

[English]

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there is one statement my hon. colleague from Quebec has made that I strongly disagree with. He said that the bill was flawed but it was better than no bill. That is one of the problems in the country. Bad laws are worse than no laws.

Why can he not agree with the amendment we are debating this afternoon to wait for at least six months and work on it to make it not such a bad law?

My first question is not the most important of my two questions. I have been working with the Senate; I have been a watchdog for a year and a half. Would he agree that we should allow the Senate to examine the matter very closely, to be a chamber of sober second thought? Does he feel that the Senate has a legitimate role to play in the legislation? Would he like to see a Senate that would be truly representative of Canada, all

provinces, create equality and play a legitimate role in checking out the legislation?

• (1600)

My second question is the key question. I cannot figure out why the Bloc is not opposed to legislation that so clearly infringes on areas of provincial jurisdiction, such as education, requiring federal education courses to be taken in the provinces; regulation of private property, clearly in the Constitution as an area of provincial jurisdiction; and licensing, increasing provincial taxes.

I understand the Quebec government is looking for \$300 million in compensation to implement the bill and the minister says it will only cost \$85 million. How can the member go along with a bill that so clearly infringes on areas of provincial jurisdiction?

[Translation]

Mr. Crête: Mr. Speaker, I will answer generally first on the matter of the Senate. I believe the Senate is outdated. The other House is an outmoded institution, which reflects the view of the 19th and earlier centuries that elected representatives lacked sufficient education and therefore needed the opinion of wiser individuals, advisers.

Today, with the quality found in the House of Commons, the Senate has become more of a political reward for those who have contributed in some way or other to the party in power. I hope elected officials will have control over this sort of legislation. If voters, in the end, had to decide on the basis of legislation we passed, they would decide on the situation as a whole.

However, as regards the six-month delay, I myself believe and I think the Bloc caucus agrees, I cannot speak for the other caucuses, that we have been very well informed on the entire question of firearms. Lobbying has been very strong from all sides, I daresay even exaggerated at times. We had to examine all of it. I met many groups of voters in order to form an opinion about what should be in the bill and I think I have all the information I need.

As for the matter of training, the bill provides that training courses given by the Government of Quebec will be accepted by the federal government and that hunters who have taken the courses will not have to take them again. In this regard, the Bloc has won a major point by protecting the lives of ordinary people from disruption, and this is one of the amendments that leads me to believe the bill is balanced enough for me to vote for it and promote it. With the support of the vast majority of Quebecers for gun control, this amendment, among others, serves the needs of the rural population, which I represent here, and which I believe will enjoy long-term benefit from this new bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, perhaps I may draw your attention to Standing Order 18 which says we do not have