

*Government Orders*

issue. Hopefully the speeches heard in this House will serve to enlighten the members on their final vote.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval-Centre, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today we are debating on second reading Bill C-68, an act respecting firearms and other weapons. The current Liberal government is making it a key piece of its legislation.

The famous red book to which our colleagues across the floor so often refer promised tough legislation in the area of gun control. The Bloc Quebecois, like most Quebecers, has always been in favour of tighter gun control.

• (1620)

A number of recent tragic events have made all of Quebec aware of the inescapable reality that firearms are dangerous and kill readily.

Murderous rampages are a fact in our society: 1984, Assemblée nationale, three killed; 1989, Ecole Polytechnique, thirteen women killed; 1992, Concordia University, three professors killed. These events are etched in our collective memory.

Bill C-68 is therefore a step in the right direction. It proposes measures to ensure better control over the purchase, possession and storage of firearms.

It provides for more severe punishment for the possession of a prohibited or restricted weapon. It also introduces new offences and denunciatory sentences for the illegal importing and the trafficking of arms. It will now be prohibited to import or sell .25 or .32 calibre handguns and handguns with a barrel length of 105 millimetres or less.

Finally, the bill establishes a national registration system for all firearms, to be administered by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in co-operation with provincial and municipal forces.

This system will help police forces to combat the criminal use of guns: first, orders of prohibition for certain weapons will be enforced; second, the fight against smuggling will be stepped up by controlling the kind and the quantity of firearms entering the country; third, compliance with the rules for the safe storage of firearms will be ensured; fourth, it will be easier for police forces to track stolen weapons or those used to commit crimes.

Setting up the gun registry is a positive move. We nevertheless deplore that this system will not pay for itself, as was initially promised by the government and demanded by the official opposition. In fact, the Liberal government estimates that, over a period of seven years, it will cost \$85 million to implement the system.

The Bloc Quebecois has no problem recognizing that this system will help fight against the illegal sale, possession or use of firearms. However, the official opposition believes that the period for registering firearms must be shortened. In spreading the deadline over an eight-year period, the government has chosen to compromise the attainment of the goals of police forces.

The Bloc Quebecois has no doubt that the Minister of Justice and his government caved in to the repeated attacks of several pro-gun lobby groups. Does the power of money compare to the power of AK-47s?

How else could we explain that over 13,000 military type automatic weapons, including over 4,000 AK-47 machine guns, will remain uncontrolled?

What kind of moral or logical justification could there be for owning such a firearm? Partridge hunting? We could lose a lot of feathers if that were the case. Personal protection then? In that case, we have powerful enemies. The desire to own collector's weapons? Is an AK-47 a work of art? Unless, of course, we want to turn it into a symbol of our civilization.

The government did not have the courage to do its homework. It evaded its responsibilities by asking the Standing Committee on Justice to find solutions to problems the government itself created.

For example, the government has asked this committee to find an acceptable solution in the case of firearms that have special significance for some people as family heirlooms, so that owners can bequeath their firearms to their children as part of their inheritance. That may be a legacy of love.

• (1625)

Given the situation, the Bloc Quebecois can only support wholeheartedly the recommendations made by coroner Anne-Marie David. The Liberal government should do the same.

Coroner David suggests that the Minister of Justice should amend the wording of the regulations on the safe storage, display and transportation of firearms to make it more consistent and easier to understand for the whole population. She feels that the current regulations are confusing and that not distinguishing between unrestricted and restricted weapons contributes to the confusion.

What Boileau said in the 17th century is more valid than ever: "A well-formed thought can be conveyed clearly, and the words to express it come easily".

Coroner David also notes that the current regulations allow weapons to be displayed. Is it unreasonable to believe that such a display can be an incentive to steal weapons or arouse the curiosity of some people who may be tempted to handle them?