

Gun Control

would be the case of a domestic dispute which might end in the death of one of the people involved.

It has not been found that this power has been abused by the police. Moreover, the provision requiring a return before a court whether or not articles were seized provides a check on undue harassment of individuals. If the Hon. Member knows of examples which might counter my argument, I would be pleased to hear them. However, I am not aware of there having been an over-all abuse of this by the police. I would be the first to ask the Government to review the policy if the Hon. Member could show some facts that would dispute my position.

His other amendment in Bill C-213 would abandon the need for a firearms acquisition certificate in 25 electoral districts spread across the country. How would the Hon. Member explain to Members representing those areas the creation of inequities in safety and rights of people in those areas as a result of this amendment?

The FAC provisions were intended by Parliament to apply equally throughout Canada and not give one region an advantage over another. This is not the way the gun control legislation operates in Canada. Why should the general public residing in these regions be afforded less protection and benefit of the law than those who reside in large urban areas? I recognize that there is a problem with respect to distances and people having to travel a long way to get a licence as a result of provincial regulations. However, I suggest that this is an administrative problem rather than something requiring an amendment to the Criminal Code. That is why I cannot support that second provision in his Bill. Perhaps there is another solution to that problem.

The Government is currently reviewing the legislative portion of the firearms control program to determine which amendments are required to further facilitate its administration. While contemplating no alteration of the fundamental principles underlying the program, it will be seeking to find ways to enhance the protection of the public, as well as to limit some overly burdensome administrative provisions of the law which inconvenience legitimate gun owners and which do not serve to protect the public. This review will help to ensure that the firearms legislation is able to respond to problems which were not anticipated at the time of its introduction.

It is an interesting coincidence that today we are debating the death penalty. I have discussed the question of the death penalty with enforcement people in my riding. As an abolitionist, I was comforted to hear that stronger penalties for illegal use of firearms would be preferred by the senior members of our forces rather than the use of the death penalty. Our local police have managed to reduce the crime rate in our region which, unfortunately, is very high in comparison with the rest of Quebec as well as the rest of Canada. They are doing a splendid job and certainly would not appreciate any relaxation of gun control.

My area is also a natural paradise. There is plentiful game and a beautiful landscape. Therefore, my constituents are very individualistic, but they recognize that there is a need for gun control and the legislation we have at the moment. While it may be imperfect in some technical, administrative way, it is protecting the public and giving them a chance to enjoy the sport that they want to enjoy in our region.

Mr. Bill Tupper (Nepean—Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased this afternoon to take part in the debate on Bill C-213. The purpose of this Bill is to relax certain features of the gun control legislation that has been in effect since 1979, while retaining strict prohibition of firearms possession by those convicted of violent or firearms-related offences.

Section 95 of the Criminal Code makes a firearms acquisition certificate mandatory for practically anyone seeking to acquire a firearm. If I understand this amendment correctly, it would accordingly eliminate the requirement for a firearms acquisition certificate for residents of the more northerly and remote regions of Canada in some 25 constituencies.

The other amendment deals with the section of the Criminal Code which currently provides extensive powers to police officers to search for and seize firearms without a search warrant, in some circumstances. This amendment would remove the power to search a house without such a warrant.

My life today is much different than it was at one time. I want to speak to this Bill from some personal experience in the area of firearms.

In the course of my professional life I have been obliged to carry a firearm for a variety of reasons. I have been obliged to carry a firearm to protect myself from wildlife. I have been obliged to carry a firearm to provide my food supply. I regret that I have been obliged to carry a firearm to protect my life and the life of those with whom I worked. Of course, in my farming operation in which I am involved, the use of firearms is not necessarily a daily occurrence, but it is frequently required to protect my livestock from rodents, wolves and so on.

I approach this Bill with a considerable amount of personal interest.

In the spring and summer of 1976, and again in the same period in 1977, the House of Commons went through an emotional and controversial period, all in aid of amending the gun control provisions of the Criminal Code.

Finally, in July, 1977, Bill C-51 was passed, and that is the legislation that is on the books today. I think it has been well received in Canada.

The legislation contains several significant provisions. Those measures include the increased court powers to prohibit persons with histories of violence from possessing firearms; stiffer sentences, including a mandatory minimum for persons using guns to commit indictable offences; tighter controls over firearms businesses or dealers; expanded powers of firearms seizures for police to aid them in dealing with domestic