

*Measures Against Crime*

As I have said on a couple of occasions before, guns are tools. In the hunting or trapping family they are part of everyday life, and no matter how safely they are stored they are always accessible to children. Because of this children must be taught to use guns safely and effectively at a very early age. It has been my experience that children are usually given their first gun at around 12, 13 or 14 years of age. They are trained in the use of guns very carefully by their parents who know how to use them, and safety is the number one point that is always stressed.

Other clauses in this bill attempt to regulate or control the circulation of guns by making it an offence to loan or sell a gun to someone who does not have a licence. That makes sense in the city. There are too few legitimate reasons for guns to be used that it is of only minor inconvenience to make sure that the required documents are on hand, and this can be done very easily in the city.

However, I should like to mention here that there is a long-standing tradition among hunters, trappers, and prospectors that a person will loan his tools; his guns, his traps, his sleeping bag, his dog team, his motorized toboggan, or whatever, to a person who is without these means of survival. By making it an offence to do this with one of the most necessary tools the government is destroying a tradition and adding hardship to people who may be in need of a gun to make a living during critical times of the year. That is the time of the migration of the cariboo, of migratory birds, and so on. These are problems that do not arise in the city.

The government should be aware that by trying to solve problems in one part of the country it is actually creating problems in other parts. I have mentioned in this House before that in cities, especially in Ottawa, we all know as members of parliament that we have to contend with red tape. Much of the time we have great difficulty in cutting across the red tape. In the Northwest Territories and in the Yukon we have another problem because there is a high ratio of civil servants to the general population. We have learned there that we not only have to cut tape traditionally like it is done here, but most of the time we have to cut the tape lengthwise instead of crosswise, and that is not easy.

There are other parts of the bill I feel are either too strict, not strict enough, or too vague. For example, the bill contains provision for a licence to be issued on the word of two guarantors. Why is there no mention of the applicant himself or herself proving that he or she is able to handle firearms safely, and why are there no provisions for public education about the dangers of firearms?

I have one other suggestion. As I understand it, much of this gun control legislation is aimed at preventing the "I didn't know it was loaded" type of accident. Would it not be possible to do the same thing and to replace much of this bill by requiring or making it mandatory that all guns have a trigger lock, keeping the guns locked up, and not easily accessible particularly to children? Such a lock, if kept in place at all times when a gun was not in use, would sharply reduce the number of accidental shootings and would provide a little time to think for the person who picks up a gun in the heat of an argument.

In addition I would like to see the hunters, trappers, prospectors and fishermen in the Northwest Territories

[Mr. Firth.]

and the Yukon exempt from the licensing aspects of this bill. They should keep their firearms under lock and key at all times to prevent accidents.

Having regard to handguns, it is very important to people who work in my part of the Territories, and I am thinking of prospectors, pilots, hunters, trappers and so on who go out into the bush, that they be allowed to carry handguns not only for protection but as part of their survival gear. These people are not always in a position to carry a heavy rifle. There are times when they have to go out with a number of packs carrying their food, survival gear, and that kind of thing, and if you add a heavy rifle on top of their burden it becomes too much. That person is not going to endanger the life of any human being out there in the bush. By having a handgun this would be a convenience, and this is one other part of the bill that I think should be looked at carefully. I would like very much to have this aspect of the bill considered on behalf of the people of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

As I mentioned earlier before calling it five o'clock, I consider this bill to be another erosion of the rights of the native people of this country. It is an erosion of their aboriginal rights to hunt, trap, fish and so on. This is another area in which we are taking away the rights of these people without very much consultation. That is all I wish to say, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon):** Mr. Speaker, much of what I have to say parallels that which has been said by my neighbour, the hon. member for the Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth). However, there are a few areas he has not covered and a few examples he has not cited. I am sure we are on all fours on the manner in which we view this legislation.

What the hon. member has said, and what I had intended to say, in respect of the rights of the native peoples in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon brings up a question in my mind as to whether—and I am very happy to see the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Buchanan) in the House because this has perhaps not occurred to him—the provisions of this bill in so far they affect the native peoples of this country are constitutional. They have been granted by treaty in many significant instances the absolute right to hunt and fish on all unoccupied Crown lands. The Treaty of Paris guaranteed, in the case where no individual treaties exist, the absolute right to hunt and fish on all unoccupied Crown lands. This bill purports to interfere with that right which has been given to them by Her Majesty in the Treaty of Paris, and by the Government of Canada in certain specific treaties across this country.

● (2020)

This used to be a very serious constitutional question which in all probability the government did not even look at in drafting this bill, but I do not find that unusual with regard to this government particularly in view of the answers given by the minister to questions asked by the hon. member for the Northwest Territories in respect of the granting of permits. Had it consulted in depth the native organizations in this country in respect of all provisions of this bill, no doubt forceful views in respect of the absolute hunting rights of these people would have been