

they agreed that all inadequate conversions should be banned. Most of the witnesses also agreed that converted firearms are not required for legitimate hunting purposes, although some are so used. Their primary use would appear to be in the areas of competition shooting and collecting.

It was proposed to the Special Committee that inadequate conversions could be dealt with by way of conversion standards applied at the point of entry into the country. The R.C.M.P. firearms expert, Mr. Smith, advised, however, that conversion standards would be administratively unfeasible because they might have to be developed for each model of automatic firearm manufactured. Moreover, the customs officials who appeared before us advised that they do not even have the personnel available to examine every shipment of firearms, and conversion standards would require that each individual converted firearm be examined by a qualified expert to determine that it had been adequately altered according to specified standards.

The Special Committee believes that at least many, if not all, converted automatics are potential automatic weapons and thus a danger to public safety. The development and use of conversion standards to determine which do not present an unacceptable risk of reconversion would not appear to be a feasible approach, and it does not seem likely that the numbers of potentially acceptable conversions would warrant such an approach in any case.

RECOMMENDATION 16

The Special Committee recommends that all firearms manufactured as fully-automatic weapons, but converted to fire as semi-automatics, be prohibited as proposed by Bill C-80.

B. The Disposition of Converted Automatics Now in Private Hands

While the Special Committee agrees that allowing people to retain converted automatics which may be relatively easy to reconvert could pose a danger to public safety, we believe that danger can be dealt with by ensuring that these firearms ultimately end up in the hands of qualified gun collectors. We accept that all of those presently in legal possession of these firearms have been given the impression by the government that they would be allowed to retain them. We therefore believe that grandfathering provisions should be fashioned so as to allow all present owners to retain these firearms for a specified period, but only as registered restricted weapons. During this period, however, they would be required to either transfer these firearms to genuine gun collectors or attain the status of collector themselves. The class of genuine gun collectors would, as recommended later in the report, be properly defined and controlled with regard to such issues as safe storage, so that these and other dangerous firearms would be safe in their hands.

Therefore, under the system proposed by the Special Committee, present owners of converted firearms would, subsequent to the enactment of new legislation, be faced with essentially four choices. They could simply surrender these firearms during an amnesty if they did not wish to retain them. They could register them as restricted weapons and thereafter sell them to properly defined genuine gun collectors during a transitional period. We anticipate that there would be a healthy market among such gun collectors for these firearms. The Special Committee would also recommend that the federal government agree to buy back these firearms, and thus, owners of such firearms would also have the option of selling them to federal authorities.