

Senator Carstairs: I have another question for the honourable senator. Let me say to the senator that the safe storage regulations have not yet been written.

Senator Berntson: Why not?

Senator Carstairs: The safe storage regulations found in Bill C-17 certainly allow you to transport a gun under those circumstances. However, the provisions of that bill do not allow you to carry it to a public meeting. I must suggest that I think that is not a bad idea.

Does the honourable senator not agree that an employee of his who is to take his gun should have some training in the use of that gun, and some knowledge of safety standards with respect to the use of that gun? Alternatively, does the honourable senator think that anyone should have a gun without any training whatsoever just because they want to have a gun?

Senator Sparrow: I thank the honourable senator for her question. It is ridiculous, but I am prepared to answer it.

You do not give a gun to someone without a reason. I explained the reasons why they would have a gun on the farm. They have a use for that gun. It is the same as the native community.

The honourable senator is implying in her question that only dumb people would give someone a gun to use for any purpose. I would ask her to consider the situation in the North. The aboriginal people do not give their guns out willy-nilly. They train their people in the use of firearms. We train our people. We will not give out those guns willy-nilly, either. Surely to goodness we are not that retarded, although you may think so. We do not use these tools the same as we would use a tractor, an all-terrain vehicle, a combine, a swather, any tool on the farm. That is what I am saying: The honourable senator just does not understand that aspect of this issue.

• (2040)

Senator Carstairs: I think I do understand. Quite frankly, I think that if they indeed have that knowledge about safety, it will be very simple for them to qualify for a licence.

I have one final question. How do you explain that the rate of suicide by guns, and particularly rifles and shotguns, and the rate of domestic violence using rifles and shotguns, is higher in the Prairie provinces, in the Northwest Territories, in the Yukon, and in rural Canada than in urban Canada?

Senator Sparrow: Honourable senators, that is a great question, and I should have covered that.

There are far more guns per capita in Western Canada on the farms than in the city of Toronto. Every farm in the community has a gun. Almost 80 to 90 per cent are gun owners. In the North,

it is the same. In Toronto, it would probably be 2 per cent of people. Of course the per capita rates of gun accidents and suicides are higher there.

If you are trying to indicate to this house that, in fact, guns cause suicides, I say that is nonsense. Guns do not cause family violence. There are other issues. Youth commit suicide because they have no hope left. That is what happens in a lot of cases, certainly in the native community. It is not the gun that causes the suicide. It is not the knife or the rope. It is not the car that runs into the bridge that causes suicide. It is the drugs and the alcohol and the loss of hope, things that are not covered in this legislation.

Senator Carstairs: Honourable senators, I have to ask one more question. I would like to know why there are more deaths among young men by suicide, despite the fact that more young women attempt suicide than young men. Is that not a direct result of the fact that young men, tragically, choose to use guns, which are fatal, and young women choose alternative methods?

Senator Ghitter: You have no statistics to bear that out.

Senator Sparrow: Honourable senators, I have an answer to that one, too. It does not matter whether or not the guns that are used for suicides are registered. They will use the gun whether or not it is registered. If the honourable senator is telling me that a cabinet with glass on the front and a little lock on it will stop them from getting the gun and committing suicide, I would say that the honourable senator is fooling herself and fooling the people. This is really a method of fooling Canadians into believing that we are doing something about gun control and crime in this country. It is not working. Suicide is not caused by guns. It is caused by other social problems, and the registration and the licensing of guns have absolutely no bearing on those problems.

Hon. Gerry St. Germain: Honourable senators, I wish to make a brief comment on this issue, although I do intend to enter the debate on the main motion.

I compliment Senator Sparrow on his motion. I support this motion on the basis of logic. Senator Sparrow has brought to this debate straight logic and a common sense that reflects the areas that we represent, the North and the rural and remote areas. It is hard for people who live on Wellington Crescent, Southwest Marine Drive, or Forest Hill in Toronto to understand what he is talking about. I think Senator Olson fully understands. It is based on pure logic. The people are trained, not formally through courses that really do not mean anything, but through experience, because of necessity and survival.

This argument is not being presented to speak against urban communities. However, it is an argument that must be understood. That is why we wanted so many of you to come out to the hearings and travel to the North, to visit with Senator Watt and Senator Adams and the rest of those who occupy that vast