

control package. He has indicated his willingness to continue to oppose this federal legislation.

• (1645)

The minister has made it clear that he will proceed delicately with respect to imposing the administration of this gun control legislation on Indian reserves, many of whom are unalterably opposed to the provisions. This holds out the unseemly prospect of one approach for non-aboriginals, and another for aboriginals, in violation of the basic concept of equality of all citizens before the law.

From a political standpoint, no one in his right mind believes that the federal government, in association with the separatist government of Quebec, is going to vigorously and actively proceed to register every firearm in that province, including those on aboriginal reserves, during a period of constitutional uncertainty.

In other words, even a cursory examination of the practical aspects of administering the bill across the country by provincial governments, half of whom profoundly disagree with it, and on aboriginal reserves, the majority of which disagree with it, reveals profound weaknesses in the potential administration of the bill, profound weaknesses which will render it ineffective in achieving its purpose.

The third test of a good law is that it must be capable of carrying the judgment of the people who pay the bills and for whose benefit it has been introduced. In other words, it must pass the test of democratic consent and support.

Since the bill was first introduced, the government has maintained that it has vast public support, citing various public opinion polls in that regard. However, governments, especially elitist ones that boast of their ability to spin doctor the issues, have a habit of deceiving themselves on the subject of democratic support and their reading of the polls, as was profoundly illustrated in the country and in the House with respect to the Charlottetown accord.

Various polls have been conducted which ask the public whether they are in favour of gun control, and of course the majority answered in agreement. These polls usually fail to follow up that question with the more pertinent question: Should the focus of gun legislation be on punishing the criminal use of firearms or regulating the non-criminal use of firearms? If and when that question is put to the Canadian public, I submit that the majority favour coming down like a ton of bricks on the criminal's use of firearms which is precisely the Reform position.

Other polls ask whether the public supports the federal government's proposed gun control legislation, but fail to ask whether the respondents are in any way, shape or form, familiar with the federal government's gun control legislation. They

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completely miss the point that as the public gains more and more knowledge about this bill, its support for it declines rather than increases no matter what the initial level. This was precisely the same pattern of declining support which ultimately sank the Charlottetown accord.

Made in Ottawa solutions to national problems, if promoted and promulgated by governments with vast dollars to spend on public relations, initially receive a high rating—in the vicinity of 60 per cent to 65 per cent—with the public. However, as the public gets to know more and more about the legislation, as they examine it for themselves, as they discuss it, as they hear the perspective of the provincial and municipal politicians, the interest groups, the academics and their friends and neighbours, the track record is that public support declines in direct relation to increased knowledge about the legislation.

Any piece of public legislation is subject to declining public support, a trajectory which in the case of this bill will mean that less than 50 per cent of the public will support its provisions by late this fall. That is the sign of a bad law, a law which cannot be properly enforced and will not achieve the intent of Parliament because it does not carry the judgment of the people who pay the bills and whom it supposedly benefits.

I therefore submit in conclusion that Bill C-68, if passed into law, will not be a good law. It will be a bad law, a blight on the legislative record of the government, a law that fails the three great tests of constitutionality, of effectiveness and of the democratic consent of the governed.

• (1650)

What should be the fate of a bad law? It should be repealed, which is precisely what a Reform government will do when it eventually replaces this government.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, a point of order. If you would seek it I believe you would find unanimous consent that the vote initially scheduled to take place at 5.30 p.m. this day be rescheduled to 6.30 p.m., immediately after private members' hour.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: So ordered.

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very interested to hear the remarks of my hon. colleague, the leader of the third party in the House.

I listened with interest because I want to tell him that I would also listen with interest if I heard those loud cries from the civil libertarians in this country. I, for one, would listen to those and I am sure members on my side of the House would also listen with me and react.