

Measures Against Crime

There has also been comment about the provisions of the bill removing the 90-day notification clause in regard to wiretapping, generally viewed as a serious infringement of personal rights. Also, in addition to the existing provision relating to search and seizure under the authority of a warrant, the following amendment is proposed to section 105(2):

Where, with respect to any person, a peace officer is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that it is not desirable in the interest of safety of that person, or of other persons, that that person should have in his possession, custody or control any firearm or other offensive weapon or any ammunition or explosive substance and that the danger to the safety of that person or other persons is such that to proceed by way of an application under subsection (1) would be impracticable, the peace officer may without warrant search for and seize any firearm or other offensive weapon or any ammunition or explosive substance in the possession, custody or control of that person.

This seems to be a very far reaching amendment and places in jeopardy the whole requirement that a warrant is necessary to search a home. The present limitation has been eliminated, namely, the assumption that an offence has been or is being committed as justification for entering premises other than a dwelling-house without a warrant. If approved, this amendment would provide blanket authority for any peace officer to enter any premises, including a dwelling-house, without a warrant, ostensibly to search for and seize firearms and ammunition. Hence, this gun legislation may well be opening up the way to a greater threat to civil liberties than generally thought. I think that this part of the bill contains extremely dangerous provisions and must be looked at very carefully. It seems to me that if this provision is accepted, any policeman who wanted an excuse to enter any building would now have one.

There are also many other interesting clauses in the bill; for example, the provision relating to the carrying of a weapon to a public meeting. Will the farmer who normally carries a weapon in his light truck be guilty of breaking the law when he attends, say, a 4-H club meeting? It would appear that he will. Again, the owner of a weapon who may have for some reason lent another person his gun will, it seems to me, incur severe penalties. I believe this point was made last night by the hon. member for Kent-Essex (Mr. Daudlin). I suggest that a person who is normally a law-abiding citizen could incur such a penalty inadvertently.

If I may bring my remarks on gun control to a conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I should like to refer to the view expressed by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, that cessation of the sale of firearms will not remove them from the hands of those who would do violence. This association came down heavily against gun registration as being unrealistic and administratively unworkable. It does not seem likely to me that an ownership licence will be any more effective than registering a gun. In fact, I think it would be less effective. An ownership would have to be renewed every five years, whereas presumably there is no need to re-register a gun unless the owner wants to sell or dispose of it.

It is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that if the population at large has guns, more homicides will be inevitable. As I have pointed out previously, most murders are committed in the home and many of them would have occurred even without the licensing or registration of firearms. Only if all guns were prohibited would there be a satisfactory or signifi-

[Mr. Ritchie.]

cant drop in the number of gun murders. Various countries around the world, such as Sweden and Switzerland, have a high incidence of gun competence and gun ownership, and these countries are freer of crime than most other countries. In other words, there is nothing to indicate any correlation between the use of guns and the incidence of crime.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, may I reiterate my unhappy feeling about this omnibus bill that gun control has been introduced along with four or five other quite desirable amendments that would contribute, I believe substantially, to the fight against crime. I refer to the provisions relating to parole and those providing that provinces can institute crime inquiries, and so on. It is most important that the House allow the bill to go to committee, in accordance with the amendment moved by the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams), so we can separate the very controversial gun control provisions from the rest of the bill which is generally desirable. In that way better legislation might eventuate. I am sure we will find that, as presently drafted, the legislation will be of no value whatever in curtailing homicides or crimes committed with the use of a gun. In effect, the bill will be detrimental to law-abiding citizens in this country.

Mr. John Roberts (St. Paul's): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak briefly on this proposed legislation in order to reply to one or two of the comments made from the other side of the House, to indicate one or two areas of concern I have about the proposed legislation and also to state my fundamental and strong support for the basic principles of the bill. It is important legislation, and I hope the House will quickly finish its work at this particular stage so we can get the bill to committee where suggestions for change can be made and considered.

The first argument I should like to comment on is one that is frequently made by members on the other side and which, indeed, has been made again by the hon. member for Dauphin (Mr. Ritchie), namely, that controls do not work, that the attempt through this kind of legislative proposal to diminish deaths which take place through the use of a gun will not be effective. I would suggest to the hon. member that there is one relatively simple fact which throws doubt upon this argument. We know, for instance, that while controls applied to long-guns in Canada are similar to those in the United States, and the incidence of crime when using these guns is roughly parallel, there are much more rigorous controls in relation to hand-guns in Canada than in the United States.

● (1540)

As a result of these controls there is a rather dramatic difference in the possession of hand-guns in Canada and in the incidence of firearm incidents. I believe there are roughly 700,000 handguns in the possession of Canadians, while the number in the United States is 35 million—a ratio of 50 to 1 in comparison to the population, which is 10 to 1; and there is a much lower accident incidence in the use of hand-guns in Canada than in the United States. It is obvious that the stricter controls we have in Canada have been effective in persuading Canadians not to seek to hold hand-guns. Obviously, since 700,000 do hold them, those who feel a real, genuine need to have them do have them,