

Government Orders

already has firearms and has no intention of buying new firearms, then the training course will not be required.

There is nothing here that is going to dreadfully harm the lawful gun owner. Sure there is going to be an inconvenience and there are going to be other things in the regulations which may be an inconvenience.

The member for Saint-Hubert talked about trigger locks. The regulations are going to require that new firearms purchased at retail dealers have a trigger lock on purchase.

• (1320)

That is not going to be a major inconvenience. It is going to be a safety factor. What we want to do is to create safety in the homes, to ask for and require safe storage, not to unduly interfere with the rights of the individual. By registration and requiring safe storage, we hope people will realize what a firearm can mean in the hands of someone who would use it improperly, whether that is someone who steals the firearm from the home or someone who is intending to commit suicide.

We have heard time and again in this House and in committee that in Canada on average there are 1,400 people killed by firearms every year. Approximately 1,100 of those are suicides. If the gun is not readily available, the chance of that suicide taking place has diminished. If there is a locked door, even if it is a glass door, and the key is somewhere else, it is going to be somewhat of an effort to find that key. If the ammunition is somewhere else, it is going to be a deterrent.

Many people have told us that some people fail to plan a suicide well in advance. Sometimes it is an instant decision. Some people decide they want to use firearms. If they do not use a firearm, they will not use anything else. Psychiatrists have told us that in committee.

We made very important amendments to this bill in committee. I think personally it is a much better bill now than it was before it went to committee.

We have taken the first offence for the non-registration of long guns out of the Criminal Code and put it in the firearms act. We have changed the inspection provisions, an example of which I gave earlier.

For those who are veterans, those who have heirlooms and relics, handguns which would otherwise be prohibited and only sold to those who have similar firearms, they can pass them along to members of their family. These handguns are mementoes of a very important time in some people's lives, perhaps when they served overseas. This is extremely important and is the sort of thing we want to do. We did it because we heard witnesses and because the members of the committee worked together.

This bill is going to be a good act. It is not going to be a perfect one but it is going to be a good one. Along with the other things this government hopes to do, it will reduce crime in Canada.

Mr. Lee Morrison (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am very interested to hear the hon. parliamentary secretary is already changing the bill. It has not even been passed yet. I wonder if this comes under section 110.

Bring the guns to the door indeed. We know better than that. It is not in the bill and the hon. member should not say things like that.

He talks about the right and privilege question again. I wonder, when did the common law die in North America if what the hon. member says is true. I believe the hon. member is a lawyer. I hope he has read his Blackstone. If he has not, I might refresh his memory.

Blackstone's chronicles state that any Englishman has the right to possess personal weapons. Without those personal weapons, no other rights of Englishmen are effective. They are void. That is very clearly spelled out. It is a long and ancient tradition in the English speaking world.

Now that it has been declared by the Liberal government that firearms, a piece of property, are something we are privileged to own, what other types of property does this government intend to declare a privilege, seditious literature perhaps? Where do we go from here?

The hon. member mentioned the question of veterans and their heirlooms. I do not know how many letters I and other members have received that begin with words: "I carried a gun for my country for three years and now my country does not trust me with a gun. What is happening to my country?" I would like to hear the hon. parliamentary secretary's comments on that. That is a very common observation I have run into. In fact the most vociferous opponents to this legislation or gun control legislation in general actually are the veterans.

• (1325)

Mr. MacLellan: Mr. Speaker, I will deal with the last point first with respect to the veterans who have a lot of firearms. In Atlantic Canada a great many of the veterans have Enfields. That is a long gun which is neither prohibited nor restricted now, nor will it be after this bill is passed. It will not be restricted in any way. It will have to be registered but it can be utilized as it was before. It can be passed on by the owner to anyone he or she wishes. Other than registration there is no further change in the ownership for that individual. The firearm will have to be licensed.

Mr. Morrison: That is the point.

Mr. Gouk: What about the 600,000 you are taking away?