

Government Orders

firearms. It will not reduce domestic violence and it will not prevent suicide.

The minister has not provided us with any statistical justification for the registration of rifles and shotguns. How can Canadians, in the absence of such information, be confident that universal registration will reduce the criminal use of firearms and thereby make society safer?

The minister defends the bill by claiming that the chiefs of police support him and have requested the registration of all rifles and shotguns. We ask this question: Why does the minister not also embrace the chiefs' position on capital punishment and on the elimination of section 745 of the Criminal Code which grants murderers the opportunity for early parole?

It is clear to me that he does not really believe that when we have a law enforcement problem we go to the chiefs of police. It seems the justice minister is only going to the chiefs of police when he needs them to support a particular bill.

We cannot afford ineffective legislation particularly in the area of criminal justice. We must have sound and proven controls in place that ensure public safety.

The minister states that the cost of the legislation will be only \$85 million. However the cost of registering a single handgun is estimated today to be \$82 and over \$100 in Quebec. It is estimated that there are approximately six million rifles and shotguns to be registered in Canada.

Taking the lowest of these two fees, the cost for registration alone comes to \$492 million. If the minister is suggesting that the registration of a rifle or a shotgun will be substantially less than the present cost to register a handgun, has the government been wasting taxpayers' money on the handgun registration system? Does this imply that the registration of long guns will not be as rigorous and thorough and therefore less effective than the handgun registration system?

I might add that the Terence Wade report clearly demonstrates that the expensive handgun registration system is defective and almost useless as a crime fighting tool. This is a report that we had to wring out of the justice department.

Let us deal with the banning of handguns and the hand held crossbow.

• (1330)

Where is the information and where are the statistics that the Minister of Justice used to justify such a draconian measure? That is what we ask for. Certainly anyone who responds to common sense will respond to those kinds of statistics that justify such measures. We have not seen them. We have not seen any of the statistics upon which much of this legislation is based.

The minister's original proposals banned the handguns used by our World Cup competitors. When asked in the House of

Commons to exempt the .32 calibre handgun which is used in those competitions he said he most certainly would not. However, Bill C-68 does provide an exemption for these handguns and I compliment the minister for taking a second look at that issue.

It is clear, though, the minister's consultative process was badly flawed in spite of his presence that he was taking expert and technical advice from all interested groups. In connection with that, in the back of one of the pamphlets which was put out with the proposals, was a list of all the organizations and groups which the Minister of Justice met with on firearms. They are listed by way of province. There are eight listed for Alberta.

However, I have been advised that the Nosehills Gun Club and the Provost and District Fish and Game Association never met with the justice minister; yet that is what the document claims. Further inquiries indicated that they sent a letter to the justice minister expressing their concerns about the gun control proposals. They did it by way of someone else who was coming to Ottawa to meet with the justice minister. They had not received a reply to their letter, which was sent by courier, as of the date on which I spoke with them.

I submit that the registration of rifles and shotguns does not and will not protect Canadians. If the registration of firearms did we would have no problem with handguns and the criminal use of handguns. Every firearms control aimed at law-abiding gun owners such as the banning of handguns and the registration of firearms is an assurance to criminals that their victims and their potential victims are becoming more and more defenceless and helpless.

It has been proven by various sources that banning a product, including firearms, does not prevent criminals from getting these items from the black market. Repeatedly governments in this country have learned that prohibitive or restrictive measures lead to an underground market where people thrive on the challenge of obtaining something illegally and where ruthless entrepreneurs profit tremendously.

This bill clearly indicates that those Canadians who so adamantly oppose registration and may defy the minister and his law will not go unpunished. Under Bill C-68 these people will be subjected to a maximum ten-year penalty, a penalty which is equivalent to those imposed on some murderers in this country. What comes to mind is Mr. Lortie who went into the Quebec legislature and murdered three people and wounded 13 others. Now he is out after serving 10 years. The justice minister wishes to equate anyone who deliberately neglects to register their shotgun or rifle with that kind of prison term. That is absurd. It is wrong. It is unconscionable. It ought to be deleted from the bill before it goes any further and I would ask the minister to do that.

In addition, this bill creates one penalty for those who in ignorance of the law fail to register their firearms and another much more serious penalty for those who deliberately neglect to