

*Government Orders*

The National Rifle Association in the United States has already expressed concern that American hunters who will be required to register at the border will not come to Canada if they have to register their guns.

If we implement tough proposals do we not risk creating a new kind of relationship between the government and law-abiding gun owners, a climate of non-compliance or civil disobedience? We must keep in mind that the legislation is counting on all gun owners to voluntarily register themselves with police and to register all of their firearms by the year 2003.

Anti-gun control proponents could use any illegal avenue to stay out of what has already been dubbed the registration swamp. We must avoid red tape and restrictions on law-abiding gun owners if we cannot yield any evidence that stricter controls would make our communities safer.

[*Translation*]

The adoption of pro-active prohibition orders has also raised objections from many firearms owners. The penalty would apply to all members of the household if one member is affected by such an order. Should we impose prohibition orders on law-abiding firearms owners because a close relative committed a crime using a firearm? Many people think this is very unfair.

[*English*]

From another perspective on the issue, I hesitate to endorse new gun control legislation before the provisions of the Criminal Code can first be fully applied and enforced. We know that Bill C-17 is still in the early stages. Insufficient time has passed since its adoption to assess the effectiveness of its measures.

Law making, to be meaningful, must go beyond the legislative process and must be enforced. Every gun control or enforcement measure requires resources for its implementation. This will be an extra burden on the RCMP, the QPP and the OPP. If the threat of massive non-compliance is carried out, our federal court system will become so clogged that it will take years to process each individual case.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

A number of inquiries conducted in various countries have shown there is no connection between the percentage of crimes involving firearms and the degree of regulation of firearms in that country. In countries with a very low rate of violent crimes or homicide, like Japan and Switzerland, the presence or absence of firearms is irrelevant. However, making young people socially responsible, giving them a good education and warning them against criminal behaviour is a major factor in producing low crime rates.

Countries that have tough firearms legislation have shown an increase in the rate of violent crimes. Countries whose citizens have a healthy cultural life and have very close family ties have the lowest rate of violent crimes committed with firearms, whether such arms are available or not. There is no evidence that more regulations have reduced the number of violent crimes.

[*English*]

Such findings are important. Homicide is a societal problem unrelated or at least marginally related to public access to firearms. The government should therefore concentrate its efforts toward identifying the real causes of crime in our society.

Bill C-68 is not only a registration bill but also a crime control bill. Imposing minimum mandatory sentences of four years for serious crimes committed with a firearm will go a lot further in deterring violent crime. Judges will be given strict instructions to no longer be lenient with the criminal element of our society and not to accept plea bargaining from defence attorneys. Measures such as these will make potential criminals think twice before they commit a reprehensible act.

The anti-tobacco and alcohol smuggling campaign of 1994 has proven to be very successful and the same methods of controls should be applied. The one-year minimum sentence will also send a very strong message that the illegal importation of firearms will be severely punished.

A huge majority of Canadians also agree that military and paramilitary weapons should be prohibited as their usefulness is totally unjustifiable in our society.

In essence, Bill C-68 responds extensively and quite adequately to Canadians' wishes to strengthen the Criminal Code for crimes involving firearms. I totally share this feeling with my urban colleagues. There are legitimate concerns since crimes committed with firearms are in effect concentrated in urban areas.

However I feel that this bill does not heed the concerns of rural Canada. A law-abiding citizen could end up with the same black mark on his or her record as a criminal found guilty of a real crime involving a firearm.

In addition, one must really question the constitutionality of the information that will be stored on the magnetic strip of the credit card style of permit. Canada is a country that prides itself in respecting the privacy of its citizens. Is the federal government not probing too deeply into people's lives? Furthermore, if this bill is adopted as is, it will be most interesting to see how the Supreme Court of Canada will react to this point as this law no doubt will be challenged.

I am reserving final judgment on this bill until I am given an opportunity to study the forthcoming amendments. I owe it to the 6,000 constituents who have taken the time to write, to sign petitions, or to verbally express their views on this controversial