

Government Orders

• (1315)

One of the things that alarms me about firearms is that at the moment we do not have any data on the number of firearms in this country. Anyone who knows anything about public health will know data gathering is extremely important in preventive measures in health. The epidemiology of any disease or any health hazard, whether it be a virus, a bacteria, a poor sewage system or a gun depends on the amount of data we have.

There are very limited data right now on guns. We do not know exactly how many guns are in Canada. The gun lobby says there are 22 million. The Department of Justices says there are six million. It profoundly disturbs me that we have no real figures to answer this question. We know how many bicycles, how many cars and how many dogs there are but we do not know how many firearms there are. This is completely unacceptable.

This act will give us the database we need to take the preventive health measures we need to make this a safe and healthy society. By mandatory registration we will take the guns out of the closets and put them where we can find out exactly how many there are.

When police are called to an incident in a home they will know if they are walking into a risk or not. When police try to go to homes where there is domestic violence they will know whether they have to remove a gun because the woman in that house is in danger. Guns are lethal weapons and so it makes sense to have them registered, traceable and retrievable by our police forces in the case of use or abuse.

Some of my constituents have questioned the potential costs of this registration. I can understand that in a time of fiscal control we do not want to incur costs to the government. However, the justice minister tells us it will cost \$85 million over seven years to register these guns.

To the members of the third party, I do not believe \$85 million over seven years is too much money to spend on saving lives and decreasing disability, especially when balanced against the savings to the health care system. I hope even the members of the third party can figure out the mathematics of that simple equation.

Another concern raised by my constituents was they would be restricted from using firearms in the film industry, a major industry in British Columbia. I am pleased to say they can rest assured this new bill will not prohibit that.

Some other members of my community are concerned because they will not be able to export their replica firearms or that the investment value of their antique firearms will be decreased. Article 22 of this bill provides for the transfer, that is the sale, barter or donation of firearms, to persons who hold licences to acquire and possess that particular class of firearm. Their collections will not be devalued or frozen because they can

continue to trade and sell their firearms with people who have the same type of firearms.

More important, in a democracy we must follow the will of the people. The majority of Canadians, 86 per cent of all respondents to a recent Angus Reid poll, said they support strong gun control measures, 68 per cent of whom are firearm owners. Eighty-four per cent of respondents support a total ban on military weapons, 71 per cent of whom are gun owners. Seventy-one per cent of Canadians support a ban on handguns, 54 per cent of whom are gun owners. It is clear Canadians everywhere think gun control is very important.

People talk a lot about the right to bear firearms. Nowhere is this in the Canadian Constitution. The responsibility to store, register and use firearms reasonably and safely is incumbent upon anyone who feels it is their right to own a gun.

• (1320)

Peace, order and good government are what the Canadian Constitution is all about and what Canada stands for. With this bill we will ensure that we continue to have peace, order and good government and that a cause of death and disability will be removed.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his amendment to this bill. It is too bad the other members of the House are not knowledgeable enough about what we are talking about to address the splitting of this bill. I have not heard anything in that direction since it was announced over an hour ago that this is what we were supposed to be speaking about.

There comes a time during every government when those creating the legislation must face up to the reality of an issue and not the politics of an issue. This is one of those times.

The justice minister has tabled what he terms a firearm control measure, Bill C-68. Unfortunately this bill goes far beyond control and borders on the unreal. Realism in any bill means that the goals and the attentions of the proposed legislation are within guidelines established by and for the people governed by democratic values.

This bill allows neither governing by nor for the people. It certainly is not democratic in values or purpose. This bill seeks to be all things desired by a select group of individuals and special interests and removes democratic choice and ultimately democracy from law-abiding citizens who choose to hold private property deemed by the few and select to be tainted goods.

Instead of attacking the problems of criminal intent, this bill attacks the rights of peace loving and law-abiding citizens who safely use and own property without concern for due process and democratic values.

That is why this bill must be split. There are two paths in this bill. One addresses the need for safety and security of the person. It binds the law-abiding people of this land together, a path that mandates the state to protect its citizens from the