

*Government Orders*

that much insurance at that low a premium rate reflects very well on its members as responsible firearms users.

In addition to some of the exaggerated language it uses, I did not like an admonition that it recently gave its members not to write to us as members of Parliaments with comments and suggestions but rather just say that the National Firearms Association spoke for them. I am very thankful that many of my constituents ignored that advice and wrote. After I received the first large batch of letters I, along with several other people, met with the minister to discuss them.

I wrote back to the constituents soliciting some further factual data. I have been very impressed with the response with the exception of one, and I only had one, I guess I would call, belligerent, obnoxious correspondent. The rest replied with very serious, well thought out letters. They gave me specific examples and detailed legitimate concerns.

Included in the consensus I received was one basic one: their concern about the right of Canadians to own and enjoy property. Previously the Government of Canada has legislated rights and freedoms, but we missed what most of my correspondents and I consider to be an essential element.

• (1610)

This Parliament should recognize the right of Canadians to own property. It is not right that a government, or worse yet regulatory body, can declare a legally purchased article restricted and demand that it be surrendered without compensation.

Generally the correspondents all had a problem with the thrust of the bill. Most of them are willing to accept the need for firearms control, but they are not convinced that this bill yet achieves what it is intended to achieve.

One of the people wrote: "Violence and gun control are two separate issues". Several put forth the proposition that the firearms acquisition certificate should be treated like a driver's licence. Safety and competency tests would have to be passed in order to obtain an FAC. We could even have classes of licences.

It was suggested by another that an independent regulatory licence granting body would be better than the present system where it comes down to some arbitrariness on the part of a clerk. This would fit in with

the ideas suggested by another writer, that rather than looking at what firearms people should own we should look at who should own firearms.

I rather like the idea of a licence as opposed to the firearms acquisitions certificate. In order to issue a licence, people would have to qualify for it; something similar to a motor vehicle licence today. In this case one would have to qualify for it in order to purchase or handle certain types of firearms. With further experience, one could add on another classification.

I would have no problem with someone retaining a licence unless he or she abused the privilege or there was some reason to revoke it; similar to what happens with our automobile licences. I think it is worth considering and is something, no doubt, that is going to be put forward to the committee.

Just to give a further idea of some of the suggestions that I have received from my constituents, I would like to share a few quotes. One person suggested: "I think you should address in particular areas of compensation for guns that are seized and would suggest that you propose a reinstatement of a collector classification". The minister today commented on that, and I commend her for including a provision to allow genuine gun collectors to keep their collections.

Another one of my writers said: "This bill threatens financially legitimate gun owners. I question whether legislation could deter a determined individual from committing an atrocity".

Another wrote: "Doug, you have to understand that many of us still suffer from the reaction to previous legislation and we fear further firearms legislation. We do not trust any government that tries to limit legitimate freedoms to own and use firearms. It is important that you look not just to complaints, but also at solutions".

Another person wrote: "The key word should be responsibility, not restrictions. Many people today gain their complete knowledge of firearms from televisions and books where guns are depicted as awesome instruments of destruction. Education is a far more progressive approach to take".

Another person wrote: "Range and shooting clubs should be encouraged where new members would be expected to complete an education component before being allowed to participate".