

legislation to solve the serious economic problems facing all Canadians.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that all Canadians understood at first glance that the government is trying to have the people forget about the real problems—which are of an economic nature—by introducing bills on firearm controls. It is true that Canadians are concerned about the dramatic increase in the crime rate but it is also true that people do not believe firearm controls to be a serious solution. I will have an opportunity to demonstrate later on in my remarks that honest citizens are the only ones inconvenienced by this control. In fact, knowing the famous peace and security program which the government introduced a few days and which is aimed at abolishing capital punishment while controlling firearms, one comes to wonder whether the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) thinks that firearms are dangerous, not criminals. Already, Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to point out the absurd consequences of that approach, and it can be expected that one day the Minister of Justice will introduce a bill to throw firearms in jail while keeping criminals on the loose. Tackling inanimate objects and making them responsible for human acts by criminals and loathsome assassins is what this same government is proposing today. I do not think that firearms can kill by themselves. When did you see a revolver walking down the street? In my opinion, it does not move by itself. To punish it for acts of individuals who want to violate the law is absolutely ridiculous. Yet that is what the Minister of Justice is proposing today.

As I pointed out earlier, the victims of firearm controls are honest citizens, game hunters, sportsmen who will have to comply with those controls while criminals continue to do what they have always done—disobey the law.

Mr. Speaker, again today I received a telegram from the Abitibi East Regional Wildlife Council. That association of honest and law-abiding citizens refuses to accept the line of thinking of the government with respect to firearm controls. I would like to quote that telegram, Mr. Speaker.

Asking for your opposition to Basford-Allmand bill regarding firearm controls. Illogical bill. Punishes and inconveniences good citizens. Law should deal with real criminals, not peaceful citizens.

● (1650)

Mr. Speaker, I represent an area where hunting is a common activity for the large majority of the people. In the northwest of the province of Quebec, we have huge forests and many species of game. Then, it is not surprising if the people of my area and my riding are hunters. They are honest and law-abiding citizens. They have rifles, shotguns, but they always obeyed the law and acted like good citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the main effect of the bill before us will be to penalize these citizens, to prevent them from practicing their favorite sport freely and without restriction. A popular slogan says: Firearms control disarms honest citizens and only criminals will be armed.

However, Mr. Speaker, it is true that this government is trying to restrict firearms possession for honest citizens through Bill C-83 but it means that criminals will be the only ones with arms.

Measures Against Crime

Criminals are happy with this bill. Not only they will not be disturbed by the law, but furthermore they will be sure that their potential victims will be disarmed.

Mr. Speaker, even if this bill for firearms control is not to make us believe that the Minister of Justice is a particularly clever man, I do not think that the minister is naive enough to believe that when his bill is passed, criminals will wait in line to have their firearms registered.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, does the hon. member allow me a question?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: He might do it only with the consent of the hon. member and—

Mr. Caouette (Villeneuve): I regret, Mr. Speaker, but I did not understand—

Mr. Fox: I asked the hon. member if he would allow me to ask him a question. I wonder whether the hon. member could tell us how the bill now before us will prevent hunters from owning firearms? How could it oblige them to get rid of their firearms since no provision in this legislation would compel them to do so. It is only a matter of asking them to obtain a license that would be valid for five years.

Mr. Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I wish the hon. member would come to my office and I will show him what hunting and fishing associations think of this legislation.

As I said earlier, the main effect of the bill before us would be to punish our citizens and prevent them from practicing their favourite sport freely and without restraint.

Let us try to imagine for one moment a situation in which a guy about to hold up a bank or commit murder says to himself: I forgot to register my gun. I will have to postpone my murder until tomorrow. Otherwise, the Minister of Justice will be angry. I do not think that this will happen when the legislation is enacted. And yet this is the impression one gets when reading the legislation put forward by the Minister of Justice. The minister knows as well as we do that it is useless and nonsense to have honest citizens register their firearms, and yet he wants us to approve a legislation to control firearms.

An hon. Member: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Caouette (Villeneuve): Later, the question.

Mr. Speaker, we believe the minister thinks or tries to make people think that criminals are stupid enough to register their firearms to please him.

As members of the Social Credit Party, we cannot accept such insignificant reasoning and the people from the northwest and from the rest of Canada will not accept it more than we do.

Mr. Speaker, I have received dozens of letters about the bill which we are dealing with today from all areas of the riding that I represent in the House. I have just quoted a telegram which was sent to me by the Abitibi East Regional Wildlife Council. I have received very interesting letters and briefs from hunting and fishing clubs of all areas of