

Criminal Code

that this process not be sidetracked because no society can afford to have its criminal law out of step with, and hence unresponsive to, the emerging problems which have to be faced.

As I said, as Minister of Justice I have a clear responsibility for submitting to parliament measures which are designed to protect society under the laws. The measure now before this House advances that protection in terms that are consistent with basic Canadian principles of individual freedom. To my mind Bill C-51 is a worthy example of the application of both of these concepts. I believe, as a result of all the discussions, all of the debates, and all of the resolutions that have been moved in this parliament on this subject, that after debate on second reading, and consideration by the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, the time has come not to talk about firearms control but to pass laws relating to firearms control.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, before I commence my remarks on Bill C-51, I wonder if I might ask the minister one question in reference to the firearms section. Do I take it from reading the bill that the present owners of long guns aside from shotguns, do not have to have a certificate or documentation? I am referring to farmers, ranchers and hunters. There may be ten million or six million owners of those kinds of guns. I have seen two figures. Regardless of how many there are, they would not have to have any certificate or licence in reference to those guns?

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member has a perfect understanding of that section. His question represents what the proposals are. As far as existing gun owners are concerned, they will not require an acquisition certificate or a licence, which is the word the hon. member used, under these provisions. They will require an acquisition certificate should they decide to buy or acquire an additional firearm. Unless and until they go to acquire an additional firearm, they will not need an acquisition certificate.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer.

I want to join with the minister in his introductory remarks with regard to the work of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. In the years I have been in the House of Commons, I have sat on most committees. I must say I have always enjoyed my associations with the members of the Liberal party, the government, the members of the New Democratic party, and the members of the Social Credit party and have respected their abilities in committee to be non-partisan and to work together to improve legislation and other matters which come before us.

Often we lawyers are criticized by people who say there are too many of us in politics. I am sure the lawyers who are present today have also heard that remark. Some credit can be given to that profession because we are used to going into courtrooms and taking a certain position for our clients—of course I am prejudiced—but the lawyer on the other side may

take another position, and naturally does. It is one commodity which you are selling. Fifty per cent of the time you are always wrong if you are litigating. Thus, you learn to lose, and you love to win. That is part of the confrontation in the dialogue, in the debate which takes place in the House of Commons and also in committee.

I join with the minister in saying that the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan), is a very learned scholar in law, a very able chairman and, above all, is a very courteous chairman to people on all sides of the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Woolliams: I think I have been very truthful.

Before leaving my introduction, I must say that working with the minister has been a great pleasure as far as I am concerned. If I am going to take a certain position, the minister generally knows I will be taking that position, or vice-versa. In that way we are able to come to grips with the subjects which are before parliament in a manner that is concise, precise, and we are able to take apart that portion we are going to criticize and agree on that portion on which we are going to agree.

Mr. Oberle: That is enough of that. Get on with it.

Mr. Woolliams: Sometimes you get heckled by your own party, but I am used to that.

An hon. Member: Start shooting.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Now, let us hear from Eldon Woolliams.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, once again we are faced with the deliberate effort to join five distinct, separate parcels of legislation into one omnibus bill. Some of them are new; some of them are merely amendments to the existing Criminal Code.

● (1620)

What bothered me all during the debate on Bill C-83 last session was that we did not get full reporting by the media; the only thing we heard about from the media was the firearms session, which was only one fifth of the bill at that time.

This bill is similar in nature, Mr. Speaker. It deals first, with firearms control, commonly called gun control; secondly, it deals with electronic surveillance, or in other words wiretapping or bugging; thirdly, it deals with dangerous offenders' legislation, formerly known as habitual offenders or habitual criminals; fourthly, it deals with custody and release of inmates under the Parole Act and the Penitentiary Act; and fifthly, the bill revises the Prisons and Reformatories Act. In other words, we really have five pieces of legislation here. It joins together these five parcels of legislation and, in my opinion, this is irresponsible, with great respect, as well as devious and reprehensible. It is done deliberately and purposefully, and, to say the least, is in the incompatible form of