

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
February 28, 1995

EVENING SITTING

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Opposition to Gun Legislation

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise today and speak on this motion. I'll be moving the following motion at the end of my address, and it reads:

That this Assembly transcend party lines and join together in demanding the federal government immediately withdraw Bill C-68, Firearms Act, which will effectively impose a costly and unnecessary national firearms registry that will have no effect on controlling violent crimes in Canada, that impinges on areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction, and transcends the tradition of property ownership in Canada being inviolate of confiscation without compensation; and further, that this Assembly urge the Minister of Justice to submit a presentation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs reaffirming the Assembly's united opposition to this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today both as a hunter and as a shooter. And like the many people, the thousands of people from across this province that have attended rallies, that have written letters, that have made the phone calls into the open line shows . . . They too are hunters, shooters, and in opposition to Allan Rock and his Liberal gun control initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, this whole initiative has a long history. It goes back to 1975 under Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Warren Allmand when they brought in gun legislation at that time that tried to do exactly the same things, Mr. Speaker, that Allan Rock is trying to do today. At that time the firearms owners of Canada said no, we are not prepared to accept this. And the government of the day backed off some — not all the way, but they did back off.

In 1991, Mr. Speaker, Kim Campbell, as the Justice minister of the day, tried to bring in more gun legislation. Again the firearms owners said no, Mr. Speaker, we don't want this; it's not needed. And yes, Mr. Speaker, members of this caucus, of the same political party as Kim Campbell, opposed that legislation.

And what do we see today, 1995, 20 years later from Pierre Trudeau and Warren Allmand? Again we see Jean Chrétien, Allan Rock and the liberals doing exactly the same things, Mr. Speaker, again bringing in gun control.

We had another example in this House today. Under Trudeau and Jean-Luc Pepin, they started the dismantling of the Crow and today they completed it, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday they totally eliminated it. It's the carrying forward of Pierre Elliott Trudeau's agenda, Mr. Speaker. They've done it now with the Crow and they're doing it with firearms. I fought that legislation in '75, I

fought Kim Campbell's legislation in '91, and I continue to fight this today, Mr. Speaker.

And it's very interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, what has happened with the members in this House on this particular issue. We've debated this issue in the House before. Last spring the Leader of the Third Party attended her national convention in Ottawa and, when interviewed on returning from that convention where they had passed a motion reaffirming their commitment to more gun control, she told the newspapers that she was in favour of tougher gun control. That was her statement. But then when she got out and about in Saskatchewan, she found out perhaps the politics wasn't on the same side as her statement, so she flip-flopped, Mr. Speaker. She changed her tune on that particular issue because she knew it was not an issue that the Saskatchewan people were prepared to buy.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, the government members, have traditionally been in favour of gun control. Their national party continues to be in favour of gun control, although I notice that some of their federal MPs (Member of Parliament) in Saskatchewan are coming forward and saying that Allan Rock's proposals are wrong. But the members opposite, on our motions in the House last spring, did stand up and vote with us, Mr. Speaker. They changed the motions, but they did vote against Allan Rock's initiatives and we're glad that they have joined us in that.

I'd like to talk about the rallies that have gone on around the province, Mr. Speaker. I have personally had the opportunity to attend eight or nine of those rallies. In those rallies that I have attended, three times there has been federal MPs there from the Liberal Party. They were non-existent at the other rallies. And in fact they have been non-existent at most of the rallies. And the same can be said for the members of the provincial Liberal Party. At only two of the rallies which I have attended have they been in place, have they stood up and commented. The rest of the time they have avoided the people, Mr. Speaker.

There are two particular issues I'd like to deal with on this motion, Mr. Speaker, that affect the people — the firearms owners of Saskatchewan. And the first is registration. Allan Rock states that the need for registration is to control crime, to control smuggling, and to prevent family violence, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the honest, law-abiding people of Saskatchewan, of Canada, are the ones that will register their firearms. It's not the criminals.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to smuggling, the federal government could not stop cigarette smuggling. They gave up on it. They said, sorry, we can't do anything about it; we quit.

They can't stop the smuggling of drugs, Mr. Speaker. If they could, we wouldn't have any in Canada. But all you have to do is ask the police and they'll tell you that there are a lot of drugs, and the federal government can't stop them. I live along the U.S. border, Mr. Speaker, and anybody who wants to smuggle,

it's not a great deal of difficulty. So the idea that registration will stop smuggling, Mr. Speaker, is a fallacy.

And family violence — Mr. Speaker, someone who has that urge upon them, that wants to commit violence in a family setting, does not stop to consider whether or not the implement that they use is registered. They simply grab whatever is handy and do whatever deed it is that they wish to do. And the fact that a firearm may or may not be registered will have no impact on that, any more than registering the baseball bats would have an impact on that, Mr. Speaker. So all three — crime, smuggling, and violence — are not going to be impacted to any great extent by registration.

Then we come to the consideration that the media — mainly from eastern Canada — believes that all those who are opposed to this particular piece of legislation are somehow, as one journalist put it, gun lobby jokers, Mr. Speaker. They believe that we're being hysterical about it, and that's confiscation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, under the legislation as it's currently outlined, the federal government is already confiscating 533,000 legally owned and legally registered handguns in this country. They've said that anything of a .25 calibre, a .32 calibre, or a barrel length less than 4.14 will now be prohibited and banned.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when all of this became news, Mr. Rock got a few phone calls from the Olympic group — the people who shoot in the Olympics — because their handguns are .32 calibre. So Mr. Rock said, well gee, you know, we can't stop the lady from Winnipeg who just won the gold medal from shooting so we'll make a special exemption for people who are in the Olympic program, that they can retain their handguns. Well, Mr. Speaker, my question has to be: how does anybody get into the Olympic program down the road if they're not allowed to have those handguns with which to shoot in the first place? So that means that we'll have an Olympic shooting team for the next Olympics, but after that they're gone.

Mr. Speaker, the one other part of the confiscation of those 533,000 guns deals with cheaply made. Well some of these .32 calibres — and my neighbour has one — is over \$2,000. They're not cheap unless Allan Rock has a different idea of what cheap is than most of the people of this province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe it's very important that the federal members of Saskatchewan, each and every one of them, that the members of this House, each and every one of them, be held accountable both for what they say and for what they do in this particular piece of legislation. I think it's very important that the public, who is interested in this issue, be very careful in looking at the *Hansard* of what people said, and in particular, Mr. Speaker, on how they vote. Because how they vote is going to tell the firearms community who their friends are and who are those who are not their friends.

And you might believe that this is just people in the legislature that are concerned about this. Well we have received quite a large number of letters, cards, phone calls of people who are very concerned about this. And I have a letter from one here,

from my own constituency, Bob and Coleen Bennett of Arcola. And their response is: no more gun laws. Enforce the existing laws, stop the gun-related plea bargains and quit harassing the law-abiding gun owner and high-taxed citizen. It is absurd to think that registering guns will stop violence. That is like thinking that registering bottles of alcohol will stop drunk drivers.

And Mr. and Mrs. Bennett are right. It will have no more effect than that. So, Mr. Speaker, I know that I have a time limit on this so I would like to move my motion at the present time. But I would implore the House to support this motion and to send a very firm message to Allan Rock that we in Saskatchewan do not support his legislation and we see no useful benefit to it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the member from Rosthern:

That this Assembly transcend party lines and join together in demanding the federal government immediately withdraw Bill C-68, Firearms Act, which will effectively impose a costly and unnecessary national firearms registry that will have no effect on controlling violent crimes in Canada, that impinges on areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction, and transcends the tradition of property ownership in Canada being inviolate of confiscation without compensation; and further, that this Assembly urge the Minister of Justice to submit a presentation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs reaffirming the Assembly's united opposition to this legislation.

I so move.

(1915)

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased this evening to join with my colleagues in voicing my opposition to the proposed gun control legislation being considered by the federal government. As Leader of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party, I have made it clear to Minister Rock in my correspondence, in every conversation and meeting that I've had with him, including my call to him a week ago, that I do not support this Bill, that my caucus does not support his Bill, that the provincial Liberal candidates do not support his Bill, that the policy convention of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party does not support his Bill, that members of this Assembly do not support his Bill, and that thousands of law-abiding citizens in the province of Saskatchewan do not support his Bill.

I have been crystal clear with the minister, with the Prime Minister, the Saskatchewan minister, the federal caucus Chair and all members of the Saskatchewan federal Liberal caucus. The Leader of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party and her provincial caucus are not only opposed to this legislation, but I am angry at the apparent unwillingness of the Minister of Justice, Allan Rock, to listen with an open mind to the logical and rational arguments being made.

Today I join in the debate in this Assembly to urge the federal government to abandon its plan to legislate the registration system for firearms proposed under Bill C-17.

I oppose the idea and the suggestion that possession of certificates and registration of firearms will reduce crime, and I do not support the legislation that embodies this idea. Whatever good intentions may have led to the introduction of this Bill, whatever belief the federal minister may have had that this legislation would create a safer society, it simply is not supported by fact. Therefore I have urged the minister, on numerous occasions that I've had to speak with him, to abandon this legislation.

Regrettably the minister does not appear to be hearing what I or tens of thousands of others across the country, including members of this Assembly, have to say. He may be listening but he is most definitely not hearing the message. That is truly unfortunate.

It is also unfortunate that politics is such today that any politician who reconsiders a position, who evaluates an issue and changes his or her mind, is condemned for a lack of principle — condemned for being open-minded and willing to listen to people and willing to show movement on an issue.

The first time I heard of this legislation was following the Ottawa Liberal convention. And I did not hear the debate nor did I vote for or against the proposal in Ottawa because I was involved with other important discussions at the time.

Upon my return, a member of the media stopped me in the rotunda, and I must admit took me by some surprise in asking me whether I favoured gun control. Of course there had been no legislation put forward at that time and I said what I believed, with limited knowledge of the details of the issue. I stated that I would be willing to support legislation that would make our society a safer place to live. I'm grateful to those who later provided information about this issue that helped to clarify what is in fact doable and what is not, when it comes to control of firearms and its relationship to crime.

Allan Rock's gun law does focus on punishing people who use guns to commit crimes. It does focus on the influx of illegal weapons into Canada. But what I cannot understand is why the federal minister believes that firearms registration will have any effect on reducing crime or deterring criminal activity. He cannot make the argument because in my opinion there is very little evidence to support his claims.

The federal minister continues to argue that somehow the suicides and accidental shootings that have taken place in Canada will be prevented if guns are registered. He said in a *Leader-Post* interview on January 30, and I quote: If firearms are properly stored, there will be fewer tragic deaths. Since 1970, 475 children have been blown away through accidents with firearms. Safe storage is the answer to that plainly, and if registration can help us with that, let's do it. End of quote.

If, Mr. Speaker . . . the minister said, if registration can help to promote safe storage of guns, then let's do it.

Well what evidence do we have to connect registration with safe storage of guns? What evidence do we have that the 19 children on average who have died every year in a country with more than a million times that population would be any safer with registered guns than unregistered guns?

I suggest that there is no evidence and that the minister is scraping the bottom of the barrel for statistics to support his argument. And the statistics he is finding are simply inconclusive and should not be used to justify legislation that will be both expensive and unnecessary, never mind totally ineffective at producing the results the federal minister is aiming for. The legislation being proposed by Minister Rock focuses on the average, law-abiding gun owner who is no threat to society, no more threat than anyone in this Legislative Assembly.

I'm absolutely opposed to the proposals that Justice Minister Rock . . . by him, and I believe that he could do the people of Canada a great service, greatly restore people's faith, by saying: I was wrong; I will withdraw this Bill. But, fellow colleagues, I know that the chances of this happening grow less each time the minister defends his proposal to cheering crowds of people from large cities who have no concept of the role that firearms plays in the lives of Saskatchewan people.

The people who have encouraged the minister to bring this forward do not understand that this legislation will not have any impact on criminals whatsoever. A criminal, determined to commit an armed robbery or a murder, will be no more deterred by gun registration than he will be by the speed limit if he flees the scene of a crime.

Every law-abiding citizen who owns a gun will be asked to make personal sacrifice of both money as well as a part of their rights and freedoms just to satisfy a misguided urge on the part of the federal minister. At the end of the day, a criminal will beg, borrow, or steal whatever weapon he needs to break the law. An individual prone to violence will reach just as quickly for a registered gun as he or she will for an unregistered gun in the midst of a heated argument. An individual distressed or depressed enough to contemplate suicide will give little thought to whether they end their life with a registered or an unregistered weapon.

So what is the point, we ask Mr. Rock. I, like many thousands to whom I have spoken at gun rallies, simply want to know, what is the point of all of this? If the government is concerned about crime and safety, then I say use the power that exists within the Criminal Code to throw the book at criminals who use firearms in the commission of crimes. But this legislation seeks to overhaul the engine of a system which only has a flat tire. It is expensive, unnecessary, and at the end of the day the tire will still be flat. As I said earlier, even if every law-abiding gun owner registered those guns, I have no evidence to convince me that there would be any positive effect on the number of crimes committed in Saskatchewan, or the amount of

violent crime committed, or on the number of gun related deaths.

So why would we do this? I agree with former provincial minister of Justice Mitchell when I say that the burden of proof is on the federal Minister of Justice. If he believes this legislation will have some effect, it is his responsibility to offer some proof, to demonstrate in some way that the solution he proposes actually fixes some problem in a tangible and identifiable way.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation threatens the rights of law-abiding Saskatchewan people. There are the hunters and sportsmen who trampled bush near Nipawin in search of a little girl who went missing. These are the farmers with the healthy respect for gun safety who protect their livestock by using the safe and careful marksmanship required in gun clubs, in cadets, and in applying the common sense and respect for firearms that has been passed down from generation to generation.

The very people who understand the power and responsibility that comes with owning a firearm are being sought out, tattooed, and branded potential criminals by the Justice department of our nation, while the criminals who flaunt the law, who defy the rules and regulations, the criminals who see weapons as instruments of fear and intimidation, would be no less a threat if this legislation were to pass than they are today.

Mr. Speaker, I join with my colleagues in this Assembly, with the petitioners, and with the tens of thousands of Saskatchewan citizens, to clearly and unequivocally oppose the changes to Bill C-17 which would require the registration of firearms, and I urge the federal government to withdraw this legislation.

Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to be able to enter into this debate tonight on this very important subject.

It is a subject of course that has been on my mind and high on my agenda for quite some time now. I've attended, over the past six or eight months, dozens, dozens of meetings all across Saskatchewan. Some of the people who are in this legislature tonight were present at those meetings; members of the Conservative caucus who were there and who spoke, and from time to time a representative of the Liberal Party. I remember one night in Carlyle where a Liberal Member of Parliament actually got up, Mr. Speaker, and took exception to Allan Rock's package and that was quite a moment, and very, very significant.

I was very pleased to hear the Leader of the Liberal Party take the position that she took tonight. I will tell her that the folks out there that I've been meeting with over the last few months were not so sure where she stood. They remembered her press conference, or her press statement that she referred to in her remarks a bit earlier, where she indicated support of the Rock package. And I'm afraid, Mr. Speaker, that the impression among the hunters and the shooters in this province is that that is the position of the provincial Liberal Party.

Now I know that following a gun meeting in Humboldt she altered that position or made statements to that effect, but the fact that she was so silent over the summer, over the fall, and over the winter on the subject was noticed by the hunters and by the shooters. And it's refreshing . . . or it's a relief that she comes out tonight, in no uncertain terms, to support the position that all of us on this side of the House, and the Conservative Party, have taken with respect to this issue.

This has been a most perplexing debate. Perplexing because the federal Minister of Justice has been so inflexible with respect to his proposals and has just refused to move and has refused to listen to any logical arguments against his package.

Indeed, it doesn't even seem to bother him that he's not able to draw the connection which the Leader of the Liberal Party has referred to — the connection between gun registration on the one hand and the crime rate or safer homes or safer communities on the other. He can't draw the connection. He doesn't even seriously try to draw the connection. He simply is going to barge ahead with this and do it, no matter what.

I made this proposal to him, Mr. Speaker, beginning last August, in a letter and subsequently to his face and in public meetings that have been reported.

I have said to him, just stop for a moment. We in the West believe that you're on the wrong track. You don't know that you're on the right track. And I said to him, stop for a moment now and let's do an evaluation of all of the gun law that we have in this country -- and we have a lot, Mr. Speaker.

We have a lot of gun law on the books. Let's do an evaluation of that law and see whether it does any good. Let's do an evaluation to see whether we're on the right track, because we in western Canada do not believe that we're on the right track with respect to this question of gun control.

I can tell you on the basis of the tremendous amount of consultation I have had on this that the people in this province do not believe for a moment that we're on the right track with the gun legislation that we already have. Now we've swallowed it. As the mover of this motion said, we've swallowed it. We swallowed it in the '70s with great reluctance; we swallowed it again in 1991 with great reluctance.

We knew at that time that the law wasn't going to make a bit of difference to the crime rate in this country. It wasn't going to make anybody safer in their homes. It wasn't going to make our communities any safer. But that was the will of parliament and we swallowed our objections and we complied with that law. And now we've said, enough; just enough already. Stop.

Before we go any further down this wrong track, let's try and be sensible and logical and a bit scientific about this. Let's see whether we're on the right track. Now he's rebuffed that. He has refused to do that kind of an evaluation, and it's not just my request or the government's request or the community's request — and he's had lots of those — this suggestion comes from the Auditor General of Canada, included in his report in 1994, and that was just brushed aside by the federal Minister of Justice.

In essence, Mr. Speaker, in essence this is a sham. This is a classic case of a government taking a complex problem, purporting to reduce it to some simple proposition — some simple proposition — and then attack that proposition, pretending thereby to attack the whole problem. So they say we got to do something about crime. We got to make our community safer and our people more secure.

(1930)

What's the problem? The problem is we don't have enough gun control. That's the problem. If we had better gun control we wouldn't have so much crime. And that's the reasoning of the federal government and their solution is to come with this package and to thereby give Canadians the impression that they're really doing something about crime, that they're really doing something that's going to make people safer in their homes and safer in their community.

And it's a sham, Mr. Speaker. The federal government hasn't got a scrap of evidence to show that there's any connection at all between what they're proposing in their Bill C-68 and the crime rate, or the safety of individuals or communities in this country.

Now Rock — he's well-named by the way; he's well-named — Rock has purported to do a big consultation across the country last summer. He was in Saskatchewan for a day and a half, two days, something like that; talked to the gun groups; got just shellacked during the time he was here. He had the gall to say, when that was all over, that he'd done a consultation, and he picked up the idea that people resented these laws going into the Criminal Code, and he wants to respond to that concern. I mean this is really a joke. And so he comes with this Bill, not in the Criminal Code but a separate piece of legislation, an Act respecting firearms and other weapons, and says: look, have I responded to your concerns or have I responded. It's not in the Criminal Code.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it may not be in the Criminal Code, but let me refer you to section 92 of that Act which provides for the offences and the punishment that will follow if you don't comply with this Act.

Mr. Speaker, if you don't have a licence to possess a weapon, or if you haven't registered the weapon, you are, on a first offence, liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years. Now that's a pretty stiff little penalty. But it gets worse. If by chance you have a second offence, not only is your maximum 10 years but your minimum is 1 year. You go to jail for at least a year. And on a third offence you go to jail for at least 2 years for failing to register your weapon — your .22, your .12 gauge shotgun which has been in the family for three generations. That's the kind of a law that the federal government is proposing; not in the Criminal Code. Who cares where it is. With this kind of Draconian kind of penalties attached to these requirements, it may as well be in the Criminal Code. So Rock's consultation has come to nothing at all.

I want to — before my time expires, Mr. Speaker — propose to the House an amendment to the motion, which I think will be

found to be a friendly amendment. I move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Carlton:

That all the words after the word "Canada" be deleted and the following be substituted therefor:

That this Assembly send an all-party delegation to make representation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs outlining this Assembly's intense opposition to the proposed firearms registry; and further, following the adoption of this motion that Mr. Speaker forward to the federal Minister of Justice a copy of this resolution with the relevant transcripts from today's proceedings.

I so move.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to speak for a few moments on this motion, Mr. Speaker, because I do believe that there are other members that have a few brief remarks as well to make.

I was very interested to hear the remarks from the Leader of the Liberal Party because I've just been looking at some of the remarks that she had made in the past and I thought it was quite wise of her to clarify a few things.

Here I have before me an article in the sixth day of the eighth month of '94, *Leader-Post*, written by Mark Wyatt, who reported on her saying that over the past month, Liberal leader Lynda Haverstock has gone from welcoming stricter gun controls to rejecting any requirement for change. And then in a later article, once again Mark Wyatt indicates, and this was on the 17th of the fifth month of '94, saying that the Liberal leader says she supports tougher laws to prevent gun ownership from becoming a way of life in Canada — I think what we should be doing is ensuring that there's less and less availability to having guns. Well will the real Liberal leader please stand up. I hope that you stand by your remarks of today, Madam Leader of the Liberal Party.

But the real reason for me to stand up here today, Mr. Speaker, is to make a few remarks on behalf of first nations people and Metis people and Northerners in northern Saskatchewan. In that part of the country it still is very much a way of life to have a gun around the household, and used readily, and almost on a daily — if not a daily, then a weekly — basis. There, it's youngsters in that part of our country are quite often taught to be providers, and at a young age will go out and learn with a parent how to properly use a gun in the way of providing for food. And this is done very much as a gardener, in very much of a fashion as a gardener is sometimes taught to use a hoe or a spade. It's just one of those things that is done naturally, and there is no fear of guns whatsoever, and it's regarded as a tool which you have to learn to use properly.

The first nations of Saskatchewan have taken a very strong stand on this. They have said that it really speaks against their treaty rights to allow them to harvest animals, to hunt for food.

They've also mentioned that in many cases some of the people would completely fail a firearms certificate test, not because they don't know how to use a gun but because of the testing methods that are used . . . completely biased firearms certificate test which would be culturally biased, and this would mean that they would end up breaking the law. So by passing this law, you'd end up making a whole portion of our society . . . in turning them into criminals. It's just something that, I think, that should be avoided. What'll happen then, Mr. Speaker, is because a lot of first nations and Metis people will end up breaking the law should this law be passed at the federal level, it'll simply add to the burden, the justice burden, of our lawmakers and our law keepers and put an intense pressure on prisons. And for what? For something that was caused by people thinking about only their portion of Canada that they're trying to respond to rather than thinking of the entire nation and people who make up our great nation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that it's very important that this message get to Mr. Rock. I want to mention also that the costs of this, I think, are rather prohibitive. It's been estimated to cost the nation anywhere from 600 million to a billion dollars. On this very day, the day after the budget, we saw them pulling out the Crow rate which is worth a couple of billion a year and they're going to pay the Saskatchewan farmers 1.6 billion. And what are they going to do with that money? Looks like they're going to use it to register guns. I think the rallying cry around Saskatchewan will be very much, Mr. Speaker, is to keep the Crow and to let Allan Rock go.

Mr. Speaker, I will stop with that, because I know that there are other people that want to make remarks as well. And I urge everybody in this Assembly to vote for this amendment and for this motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure also to participate this afternoon in the . . . or this evening in the debate that we're having.

And in my lifetime as a politician I have not really previously experienced the kinds of emotions that this debate has triggered, not only in my own constituency, Mr. Speaker, but wildlife banquets that I go to, and rallies that I go to, and calls that I get.

There are a great deal of very upset people in the province of Saskatchewan. And I guess one of the reasons for that is because what we're talking about is very fundamental to the fabric of Saskatchewan way of life. And I think they resent having this way of life being threatened by an outsider who does not understand the thinking and the philosophy, the reasoning of people in the Prairies.

Mr. Speaker, today we had further evidence of that in the Crow debate for example. We lamented this afternoon the demise of the Crow. But I'm going to suggest to members of the House that following Mr. Rock's implementation, we're going to have a lot of crows in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, simply because we won't have any guns left to shoot any of the other birds that are around.

So, Mr. Speaker, the situation is that we are experiencing — as the member from Carlton Prince Albert has already indicated — a complete flip-flop as far as our own particular stand on . . . the Liberal leader is concerned at the provincial level.

Because I too remember Mark Wyatt writing about those instances. And I too remember her strategy in trying to say, well he was wrong. He has apologized to me. Mark tells me, no, that's not the case. He has never made any apology because what he wrote was true. That was the Liberal leader's stance when she got off the plane following the Liberal convention.

And it behoves very poorly of an individual who wants to become the premier of this province to make ad hoc statements like that without fully knowing and understanding and appreciating the consequences of making statements like that. You cannot run off by making mistaken statements like that. So I was really amazed at the rationalization that she put forward in a very well-written speech, by the way, that you read off there, and I think this time you may have been keeping on track what your present-day situation is calling for.

You had further evidence of that this afternoon again during the Crow debate this afternoon, where yesterday you were saying, Madam Leader of the Liberal Party, that it was a fair budget. It was a fair budget. All regions were treated similarly. Today you're saying, well I did a little bit more research and I find that it may not be. Because I made a motion this afternoon that was unanimously approved by this House which stated that that budget was grossly unfair, and you voted in favour of that kind of motion. So it does tend to give a little bit of less credence to the position of people when they flip-flop depending on what day it is and which way the wind is blowing.

(1945)

But, Mr. Speaker, to get precisely to the issue at hand here, this isn't in my opinion, a big city problem; it's an eastern problem although Vancouver may be thrown into that situation as well.

Mr. Speaker, gun control is not synonymous with crime control, and I think that's where Mr. Rock's logic breaks down. There is no support for that position. There are no statistics that can be read that proves that this gun control will actually reduce crime. So if it does not reduce crime, why would you have the punishment included in the Criminal Code and make it a criminal offence not to register your guns? I suggest to you, and I suggest to the members of this House, that we're talking politics — pure, simple, crass politics. End of story; that's where we're at.

We already have gun laws that are tough enough. I think everybody will attest to that. Just like in a hockey rink, we've got good, tough controls in the rules. All we have to do is enforce them. All we have is supply the tools for the police officers to make sure that the laws are in fact upheld and that there are the resources available for them.

Mr. Speaker, the FACs (firearms acquisition certificate), I know, that we're dealing with now were written and drawn up by big city lawyers, by big city psychologists and so on, and so

we have an FAC that we must have. Well I would submit to you, sir, that crimes in this country are not committed only with guns, and in fact I think that statistics will bear me out that there are probably more people murdered and injured with knives than there are with guns.

So I would assume, then, the next logical step that the Liberal government in Ottawa would do is not only have an FAC but expand that and include the KKAC, which will then include the kitchen knife acquisition certificate because they are also potentially lethal weapons. And I think that you get my message, that this thing is very easily going to get out of control when you try to make political points on what is a very, very serious issue.

It's a serious issue, Mr. Speaker, because it, I think, tries to avoid a fundamental problem that we have in society. I think firearms legislation is a very narrow view of the crime problem because it ignores the much more serious issues of abuse, of poverty, of lack of jobs, of frustrations in the people that exist . . . of our people out there that exist in society. And I think that if Mr. Rock wants a clear crime policy he would address those problems and not use guns as a scapegoat.

Because, Mr. Speaker, I fundamentally believe that that is precisely what is happening here. And I'm very, very disappointed in the position originally taken by our provincial leader. I'm glad to say, and like the former Justice Minister acknowledged as well, that she seems to have her act together now and that perhaps we can count on the full support of that member and of her party as we try to address Mr. Rock's situation.

I've been to a lot of these gun control meetings, or these firearms meetings, these firearm rallies. I was in the one in Saskatoon by the way. There were 1,250 people out there, and the member from Saskatoon Fairview . . . Idylwyld — represented the then Minister of Justice who happened to be in Vancouver doing his thing there with Mr. Rock. Those people were not happy, those 1,250 people that came out in Saskatoon. Those people were not happy with the response given by the Liberal MPs.

And I have to give them credit; they came in there. They came in there and they really took a kicking because those people sent a clear message to the Liberal MPs: persuade Mr. Rock to go differently. And they got up and they said yes, yes, Mr. Bodnar — I don't know if we have to start mentioning names — did make the comment that he didn't agree with this, and he didn't agree with this, and he didn't agree with that. I got up and I challenged him. I said you come to the mike here with me right now and tell us what you're going to do about it. It's not good enough to get up and say I don't believe in this. Are you going to stand up — and when a bottom line is and when the vote comes — will you stand up for Saskatchewan people?

He refused. All Liberal MPs refused. You have to pay mouth and lip-service to an ideal but are not willing to go to bottom line and say, yes I will stand up and I will vote against Mr. Rock because the principle is wrong and it's not right for my constituents because they are not satisfied with this.

Now I'm not only going to pick on the Liberals. I'm not only going to pick on the Liberals because I issue a challenge also to the new Minister of Justice and the NDP (New Democratic Party) government in the provincial government here. I expect you to do more than pay lip-service to this issue. It's nice for you to get up and say, the Libs in Ottawa are wrong, they don't have their hat on right, and they don't really know what they're doing. They shouldn't be doing this. Well what are you prepared to do about it, rather than talk a good talk. You've got to make the walk as well.

And I'm looking forward to working with you as a government to walk the walk and make sure that something specifically is done to address this problem. And you will have the full support of the official opposition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on this issue and I speak both as a social democrat and a feminist. And before I start my remarks I would like to congratulate the Leader of the Third Party for making her statement. I would also point out that on this issue of gun control, which sadly seems to split along sex lines, we have tonight seen two women talking about the impracticality of Allan Rock's proposals. It is the clearest statement from a non-political politician I've heard yet.

I would like to say, though, that I recognize how difficult it must have been for the Leader of the Liberal Party to make that statement. I say that because I have publicly stated my opposition to Rock's proposals and many of my feminist friends have publicly chastised me for saying that. And I know that the member from Saskatoon Greystone will take a lot of heat for the position she's taken and I do congratulate her. I do think it was a courageous thing to do.

I think today we're seeing in this legislature a bit of history. This afternoon we dealt with the Crow rate and it was a unanimous vote. And this evening we will deal with gun control and I think it will also be a unanimous vote. I think what we're seeing here is Saskatchewan politics coming of age. We are moving beyond the easy schisms of left and right and we are now starting to analyse legislation on the basis of smart and stupid and how we can promote and enhance the Saskatchewan way of life for Saskatchewan people.

As a feminist, Mr. Speaker, I believe in equality, tolerance, and opportunity for women. I do not believe in violence but I do not believe that Allan Rock's proposals will curb violence against women. The proposals are ineffective and they are, quite frankly, a waste of time. We see a paper blizzard in Bill C-68 — 124 pages, 186 sections — for what? It certainly will not make any meaningful changes so that society endorses, respects, and protects women and children.

We have to get to the root of the matter and start to deal with real causes of violence, and stop engaging in selective distortion

of statistics, which has been what has characterized this debate so far.

I watched Allan Rock when he was in Edmonton. He was interviewed on national news and he said at that point, that a woman is killed by a gun in this country every six days. It didn't even take two days before I heard people saying on the street: isn't it terrible about guns, because six women a day are killed in Canada by guns. All that did was create a sense of moral panic and fear.

What is the truth in all of this? The truth is that last year 60 women were killed by guns. Now I think that's sad that even one woman was killed, but 60 women killed by guns, in a nation of 26 million people, is not an epidemic of violence by guns.

There are more important issues for women — issues like deaths by breast cancer; the hopelessness and the bleak life of poverty; the beatings of women and the abandonment of children — those are issues that we simply have to start to address. We shouldn't confuse domestic violence and guns, and think that by having gun control we will stop domestic violence. A man's best weapon is his fist, and as people in the domestic violence counselling process know, and they say, a man only has to raise his fist once and the woman knows.

We need to look at the practicality of Rock's proposals and we need to call his smokescreen for what it is. He's pretending to do something while he's distracting our attention from compelling and complex social issues. That's a typical Liberal tactic and I deplore it.

He wants us to ignore the weakening of social programs. We just saw yesterday in Paul Martin's budget a major dismantling of social programs. Starting next year the Canada Assistance Plan will no longer be tied to actual program costs. That means that women and children will be the victims. Federal money for social assistance will be block funded together with health care and post-secondary education with an ever-diminishing formula. That means it attacks women and children.

The social transfer that Paul Martin talks about is not an adequate response. It means a 15.5 per cent reduction over the next two years. That is violence — violence of a different sort. It's an attack on poor people and primarily it's an attack on poor women. If we want effective measures to stop violence, we need to demand better and more effective practical measures; not gun control that merely adds to bloated bureaucracy, offloads costs onto the provinces, and takes valuable time away from the police.

We need to do something better to stop violence. We need strong and meaningful programs to enforce women's dignity, enhance women's dignity, to increase respect for children and opportunities for everyone. We need to eliminate poverty and overcrowding, desperation and discrimination. This proposal is simply a smokescreen to distract us from the necessary work that all people, but particularly women, have been doing to work for equality and to stop violence against women.

Our social programs need to be modernized. There's no doubt about that. They do not need to be gutted and this costly and impractical legislation that Allan Rock is proposing is no substitute. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. If there are no further speakers on this motion, I just want to point out to the members, according to the new rule that we have adopted last year, there now is up to a 10-minute question and answer period, if members wish to take advantage of that opportunity. So we will now have up to a 10-minute question and answer period, if there are any.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would direct my question to the member from Saskatoon Fairview, although it could be fair way, I'm not sure.

Mr. Member, in your time as the minister of Justice, was the government planning any concrete action, any motions . . . not motions, any legislation within the House that would have impacted on this legislation of Allan Rock's to slow it down or to prevent its impact in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We gave a good deal of thought to that because the idea of some provincial legislation arose quite early on during the meetings that I referred to in my remarks. What I was saying at those meetings, and what I strongly believe to be the government's position, is that we would not under any circumstances, consider such legislation ourselves. And while I can no longer speak for the government, I believe that to be the government's position without any question at all on this issue. So that at the end of the day in my report, I said that there was simply no action that we could take of a legislative nature that would in any way preempt what Rock was trying to do.

(2000)

There was suggestions that in some way or another we use the notwithstanding clause in the charter in order to somehow insulate Saskatchewan from the effects of this legislation, and we looked at that. I took advice from the department on that and reported to the government and indeed to this House that you can't . . . the notwithstanding clause just isn't available to be used in those ways. You can't use a notwithstanding clause to exclude federal legislation. You can only do it to provide charter protection to a certain extent to your own legislation.

So in summary, Mr. Speaker, I think that there is no legislative action that the government can take, at least none that I'm aware of.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I direct my question to the member from Saskatoon Fairview. Mr. Member, I have here a copy of the Canadian constitution and under section 92, part 13, it's reading: exclusive powers of provincial legislatures. So I have to assume from that that these are powers that are granted to the province to deal with. And section 13 says "Property and Civil Rights . . . in the Province".

Now, Mr. Member, if you can clarify for me please, are firearms property in the province of Saskatchewan; are they therefore under provincial jurisdiction? Also items of buildings, such as gun club buildings, ranges, are they not also property in Saskatchewan, therefore under provincial jurisdiction? And when an outside body tries to regulate them, are they not impinging on Saskatchewan's constitutional rights?

Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, that's an excellent question. The fact of the matter is of course that rifles are property, just as automobiles and buildings and fountain pens and everything else that we use, and the federal government has no jurisdiction over them at all unless it can bring its actions under one of the heads of section 91 of the constitution.

One of the heads of section 91 is the Criminal Law and that has been the basis for their gun control legislation over the past hundred-or-so years. And that may have been an appropriate use of the Criminal Law power a hundred years ago and all of the many, many pieces of legislation that we've had since then.

But I believe a very strong argument can be made that they are now going way too far. When you look at this Bill C-68, the Firearms Act, and see the kind of regulation that it introduces into the law of Canada, it seems to me to be getting further and further away from crime and closer and closer to property. All of which is to say that they may well be moving outside their constitutional jurisdiction. And the appropriate remedy then is to challenge its constitutionality when it's passed by parliament — take it on.

And I indicated when I was a minister, that the government is prepared to consider that. We have to analyse this and we have to look at what they finally passed. But that seems to me to be the appropriate thing. We didn't want to introduce a whole gun control law ourselves. But we want to get at this question, if we have grounds for doing so, in the more traditional way.

Mr. Johnson: — Mr. Speaker, a question for the member from Saskatoon Fairview. During this debate I went to the library and asked for some information and statistics, and one of the things that I picked up was *Juristat* material, I believe it's 14, 15 . . . I'm trying to get to the . . . Vol. 14, No. 15, "Homicide in Canada". And I'm wondering if this information, knowledge, is fully around. But it says on page 10:

That the use of rifles and shotguns in homicides continues to decrease from 30 percent in 1974 to 20 percent in 1989 to 12 percent in 1993. And other types of firearms used to commit homicide in 1993, including sawed-off rifles and shotguns, have dropped to about 12 percent.

And I'm wondering if any of this material . . . if Rock has been moving any of the information there, because from reading this I would find that it's very difficult to come up with any information that suggests he should move ahead with gun control.

Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, the federal Justice minister is very creative in the use of statistics, and he has used some of

the statistics included in the publication by Statistics Canada that the hon. member refers to.

The numbers that the member cites are quite correct, Mr. Speaker. They are Statistics Canada figures and there's no doubt about their accuracy. And Rock just skips over those and selectively uses other material which he claims supports his case. The fact of the matter is, and implicit in the member's question, is that the rate of crime, the rate of . . . the use of firearms in crime will not be affected one wit.

At the heart of it, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that most of the people who support this Bill — the people in Toronto and Vancouver and Montreal — believe that what Rock is trying to get at is handguns. They watch their Detroit television and they believe they're getting at handguns.

The fact of the matter is that handguns have been closely regulated and have been subject to registration for over 20 years, and that's what the people think that Rock is all about. It's not. What he's after is shotguns and .22s.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the member from Souris-Cannington regarding the different states in the United States I believe . . . have gone to the extent of allowing individuals to have concealed weapons, and whether that has made a significant difference in their crime rates, or whether that's increased or decreased it. And I would like to have the member from Souris-Cannington answer that question.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Member, a number of the states have not gone to a mandatory concealed weapons but have allowed members of their citizenry to have concealed weapons. Florida has done so and also Oregon. In Oregon they had, prior to their legislation, I believe, about 50 concealed weapons permits. At the end of the year they had 12,000 concealed weapons permits and the net result on their crime statistics, Mr. Speaker, was a drop of 30 per cent of violent crime in the state of Oregon.

It wasn't because they took guns away from people that that reduction in crime occurred; it was because they allowed people to have firearms and the fact that the criminal element didn't know who had that firearm prevented and slowed down and caused a decrease of about 30 per cent. The same thing has happened in Florida.

When you look around the world, Switzerland is a prime example. Every male between the age of 18 and 55, I believe it is, is in the militia. They have to have a military weapon in their home, which is a fully automatic rifle. They have a very low incidence of crime there, Mr. Speaker, because they know that everybody has the deterrent. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Question period has elapsed.

Amendment agreed to.

The division bells rang from 8:10 p.m. until 8:15 p.m.

Motion as amended agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas

Thompson	Shillington	Anguish	
Johnson	Kowalsky	Cunningham	
Carson	Mitchell	Upshall	
Koenker	Lotje	Renaud	
Murray	Serby	Flavel	
Cline	Wormsbecker	Kujawa	
Keeping	Jess	Langford	
Neudorf	Martens	D'Autremont	
Britton	Haverstock	McPherson	
			— 27

Nays

— Nil

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIVATE BILLS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 02 — An Act to amend An Act respecting Our Lady of the Prairies Foundation

Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 02, An Act to amend An Act respecting Our Lady of the Prairies Foundation be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

Bill No. 04 — An Act to amend An Act respecting Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, being an Act to amend and consolidate "An Act respecting Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, being an Act to amend and consolidate An Act to incorporate Saskatchewan Co-operative Wheat Producers Limited" and to enact certain provisions respecting Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 04, An Act to amend An Act respecting Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, being an Act to amend and consolidate "An Act respecting Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, being an Act to amend and consolidate An Act to incorporate Saskatchewan Co-operative Wheat Producers Limited" and to enact certain provisions respecting Saskatchewan Wheat Pool now be read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills.

The Assembly adjourned at 8:21 p.m.