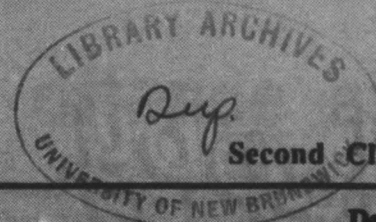


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Debate on gun laws and control continues

by Allan Carter

The debate on gun laws continues and not much has changed since the brutal murders of 14 women in Montreal last December.

The Canadians for Gun Control in Toronto have been lobbying the government to take action and tighten up gun laws in Canada.

In fact the Honourable Kim Campbell, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, introduced Bill C-80 last summer which included outlawing certain types of paramilitary weapons.

However, due to a lack of support from MPs who represent rural and native districts, Bill C-80 has been referred to a special committee for preliminary study.

Wendy Cukier, a member of Canadians for Gun Control is

afraid that the legislation will be delayed, or worse, shelved.

In an interview with Luanne Leonard from CHSR FM, Cukier says that "when it comes to rifles and shotguns, there are very few controls over who can get access to them or for what reasons."

Using statistics, Cukier states that 7% to 9% of Canadians own guns and there are about 1 million hand guns in Canada and 5 to 6 million shotguns and rifles.

Although hand guns are carefully controlled, Cukier says that after one receives a Fire Arm Acquisition permit, one can purchase as many rifles and shotguns as one can afford.

For Cukier, "the number of guns and easy access to them is a factor in violent crimes in Canada."

Cukier feels that the number of guns and the easy access to

them is a factor of violent crimes in Canada.

In regards to access, Cukier gives an example that she feels needs to be changed.

"Only people committed of an indictable offense involving violence are prohibited from owning guns. So someone who beats their wife might be charged with criminal assault (which is a summary conviction, not an indictable offence) so nothing stops them from getting a gun."

She feels this problem can be helped if a better screening process was implemented. Thus preventing people with a history of violent, mental disorders from attaining guns.

When discussing gun owners, who feel they need a gun, Cukier challenges whether or not they need a semi-automatic or para-military weapon to accommodate their needs.

Cukier believes the age for acquiring a gun should be raised to at least 18 years.

"There is an important question to be asked about whether or not a 16 year old who can't vote, drink, or buy cigarettes, should be allowed access to a gun without parental consent of any kind."

In most studies, says Cukier, they indicate that if a domestic dispute erupts, a gun will be the weapon of choice.

She also points out that most women in Canada do not use guns. In fact, she says, "a third of the people killed (by guns) are women."

But Don Hinchley, President of the Canadian Shooting Federation, does not think tightening up gun laws will solve the problem in Canada.

He believes that people's concerns about crime and the use of firearms in crime "will

only become addressed when we put some teeth into the law." He feels the biggest problem is when the law does not enforce the legislation that is already in place.

Like Cukier, he thinks there is a problem when someone who is charged with common assault can still attain access to a gun.

However, when discussing violence against women, Hinchley says society's view must be changed. He believes that because of certain television shows and various magazines, violence is well ingrained in our society, and if someone already intends to commit an act of violence, they will do it with or without a gun.

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Minute of silence

Faculty, staff and students at UNB filled the Dineen auditorium as a ceremony was held in memory of the 14 women who died on December 6 last year at École Polytechnique in Montreal. See also page 9

(photo by David Smith)

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