

Canadian Arsenals Limited

● (1530)

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question because it is an important question about public policy in this country. When we look at countries like Chile, which has a very brutal dictatorship which as Amnesty International has indicated, has not only tortured but also killed people who have opposed it, when we look at those situations, we naturally condemn those kinds of regimes and we wish to see a return to democracy in countries such as Chile, countries which have a long history of democracy. When we find out that Canadian arms or Canadian equipment that can be used by the military end up in Chile and are used to repress the population there and to maintain a dictatorship, then we are naturally disturbed and outraged. Church groups across the country have documented the movement of Canadian equipment to countries such as Chile, and they have protested this sale of Canadian military equipment to dictatorial regimes. The difficulty with the law before us today when the Government moves this corporation from the public sector to the private sector is that it invites an increase in Canada's participation in international arms trade. It invites a situation in which Canadians will be living off the profits of conflict around the world. This is not a policy that we should be following and it is one that outrages most Canadians.

Rather than creating a circumstance by the sale of this corporation which encourages us to be involved in international arms trade, we should be going in the opposite direction. Not only that, we should be following the advice of church leaders who indicate to us that we can create more employment by being involved in non-military production than we could be by being involved in destructive military production.

It is important for the Government to listen to these kinds of concerns that Canadian people have been expressing, and particularly Canadian church leaders.

[Translation]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Right Hon. the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) on a question or comment.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, I am greatly interested in the issue just raised by the Hon. Member.

[English]

I am particularly interested in his references to the export of Canadian equipment to Chile or to other countries. He may recall that nine months ago in the House his colleague, the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis) asked a series of questions relating to the Canadian export controls policy. I answered those questions indicating there was a review of that policy. I invited the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap to participate in the review and on behalf of the New Democratic Party to outline for us specifically the changes that the New Democratic Party would like to see in the export controls policy. In other words, I invited the New Democratic Party, the Hon. Member's colleagues and others, to move beyond making speeches in the House of Commons and to participate with us directly in helping to clarify the policy. That was nine months ago. I have yet to receive a

response from the Member for Kamloops-Shuswap or the New Democratic Party.

I know they would not want to be accused of simply making statements in the House that they are not prepared to back up with their actions. Will they tell me why they have not replied to my invitation to make specific proposals as to the ways we could put in place an export controls regime that would be more effective? Can he tell me whether they intend to reply, and if not, why not?

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I will not speak on behalf of my colleague from Kamloops-Shuswap; I will leave it to him to respond to the Minister. I would like to know why the Minister does not respond to the concerns that Canadians have expressed about Canada being involved in arms sales and equipment that end up in places like Chile, and why we do not move to convert those industries to civilian purposes that would produce more employment and that would pull us out of the situation of supporting regimes such as the one in Chile.

Most Canadians are familiar with the fact that there are reports in the press on a regular basis of Canada's participation in arms sales that affect countries like Chile, that affect countries like El Salvador in which we therefore end up supporting dictatorial regimes through our material efforts. I would like to see the Minister stop a number of things. One is to stop using the Export Development Corporation to subsidize these kinds of arms sales and to stop issuing permits for these sales which end up in the hands of military dictators. I would call upon the Minister to answer the concerns that Canadians are expressing about Canada profiting from arms sales that go to countries and simply maintain repressive regimes, such as the Chilean regime which, as Amnesty International has documented, has used torture and killed people who have been in opposition to that regime.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, I am quite happy to respond to those concerns, and indeed, I have been doing so. In the spirit of this Government of trying to involve citizen participation and trying to give the NDP an opportunity to put its work where its rhetoric is, I have invited, very seriously, the representatives of the New Democratic Party who raised this question to join with us in the hard work of defining the rules that Canada should follow. It is easy to stand up in the House of Commons and make speeches. It is a little more difficult to write out precisely the changes in law and practice which should be followed.

We believe in participatory democracy. We believe that New Democrats, who are prepared to get up and make speeches, should be given the opportunity also to respond with their particular proposals. What I have received is nine months of silence from the New Democratic Party.

It is a very serious matter. The Hon. Member will recall, with regard to Chile and the issue raised by his Party, that the question in issue was not arms but, rather, was whether or not we should be exporting equipment that is used by police, in effect, apparel used by police to stop riots. Is he suggesting that all Canadians who produce that kind of equipment should