

Military Equipment Export Restrictions

of combat. He indicated that he was not satisfied that an international arms registry would serve any useful purpose. He said something to the effect that it is one of those very good ideas which simply do not work. It seems to me that it is up to us here as parliamentarians to find out why, for example, an international registry could not be made to work. There are obviously some problems that immediately come to mind in terms of compliance with a registry. Nevertheless, that is the type of issue which should be raised by a committee in the type of public inquiry to which this motion makes reference.

In conclusion, I would like to say that, indeed, I support the thrust of the motion from the New Democratic Party with respect to this issue. At the same time I would point out that we have already within our own Party taken a much stronger position, recognizing the weaknesses in the present policy and proposing some very specific solutions. I would like any such inquiry to be broadened to consider the effectiveness of such solutions in providing this country with an efficient, useful and effective arms control export policy which could serve as a guide for other nations as well.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Louis-Hébert): Mr. Speaker, the Government welcomes the opportunity afforded by the motion presented by the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) to discuss the Government's policy on exports of military equipment. This debate is a timely one, considering the number of headlines we have seen on the subject in recent months. We would like to make it clear that this is indeed a very important issue, and not just because of the media attention it is receiving. The Government wants to be sure all members understand the legal and regulatory framework within which Canada exercises export controls, and it wants to clarify the guidelines that apply to strategic and military exports.

● (1720)

[*English*]

The control which Canada exercises on the exports of military equipment are but part of a wider set of export controls. The present regulation, the Export and Import Permits Act, was passed by the House in 1954 and has since been amended on various occasions. It controls both the import and export of designated goods. The Export Control List is the regulation which defines controlled export under the Act.

[*Translation*]

The export control list is established by the Governor in Council and identifies or includes all goods requiring an export licence. Certain goods may be put on the list, in order to prevent military equipment or components or other strategic goods from being made available to potential adversaries, to ensure that we have military or other equipment in sufficient quantity to defend Canada, and to implement intergovernmental agreements and commitments.

The export control list consists of ten groups, only one of which covers military equipment, while six others concern strategic goods. Since there is some disagreement as to the kind of goods that should be classified as military, the Government feels that all Hon. Members should be aware exactly what these controlled goods are. It has defined military equipment in terms of the multilaterally accepted international munitions list (Group 7 on our export control list). In addition to arms and munitions, the list includes equipment designed specifically for military purposes such as military vehicles, military telemetry equipment and certain types of electronic equipment manufactured to military specifications.

Strategic goods, which make up a large part of the rest of the export control list, are civilian high technology goods recognized multilaterally as being a potential danger to our security if they were to fall in the hands of potential adversaries. Because strategic goods can strengthen the industrial structure of those potential opponents, and therefore their military potential, we have agreed with our allies that they should be controlled. Strategic goods include products such as high performance computers, telecommunication switching equipment, advanced machine tools, certain laboratory and geophysics equipment and the technology used in their manufacturing. Those goods are not controlled as strictly as military goods, because they are normally required for civil, industrial or business use by a large number of our trade partners. Our concern with those goods is linked to potential diversion of those goods to unauthorized destinations and their improper use.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to stress the political goals pursued by the Canadian Government when applying a system of controls on military equipment exports. Each of those goals is of very great importance. They are part of the ongoing concerns of numerous Canadian governments over 25 years.

The long-standing goals our Canadian policy are: Not to supply military goods to potential opponents; to avoid getting involved in local conflicts; to avoid hindering Canadian participation in peacekeeping operations; to promote our public interest by maintaining order and stability on the international scale, including the respect of human rights.

The review made by the Government last year, the results of which were announced on September 10, 1986, led to the policy's revitalization and adaptation and to a clarification of the rules. This dealt in particular with the export of military goods, without neglecting the role of strategic goods nor this government's commitment to encourage trade on peaceful goods with all nations.

Mr. Speaker, that policy also specifies our national security and defence goals. It recognizes that Canada needs an industry capable of meeting our defence needs, by encouraging joint undertakings with our NATO allies. The ability to manufacture and export to a large number of countries, but mainly to our allies and other friendly nations, is essential to preserve the economic health and entrepreneurship of our business corporations.