

assurance can Canadians take from this incident that the government knows where it is going and what it wants to do in our trade policy, in our defence policy and in our foreign policy?

Nothing in this bill relates to the sale or possession of automatic weapons in Canada itself. That is a matter which rightly belongs to the gun control legislation introduced earlier today. That long-delayed legislation will, we hope, deal effectively with all questions pertaining to the sale or possession of automatic weapons in Canada.

By way of contrast, the bill now before us relates only to the export or import and re-export of automatic weapons in commercial contracts. However, in raising such a question the government inevitably creates confusion and invites debate on what constraints we Canadians choose to exercise over the export of conventional weapons and how effective our controls are over their export.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs raised some relevant questions in February. I quote from his speech: "The practical problems here are considerable. What weapons are defensive and what weapons are offensive? How much is enough? How can arsenals be controlled when political conflict persists and how can political conflict be brought to an end when arsenals continue to threaten? How can countries which have developed economies so dependent on the arms trade with the Middle East accept tighter controls which will cost jobs and profits? And what efforts can be mounted to bring all countries into a control effort so that restraint on the part of some does not simply lead to bonanzas for others?"

These and other complex questions raised indirectly by the bill now before us will continue to be debated by Canadians. They properly belong in the realm of foreign and defence policy. They should be raised in that context, not in the much narrower context of correcting an anomaly in the Criminal Code. For our part, we in the Official Opposition would welcome an early review of Canada's armament and disarmament policies, of Canada's policies with regard to the export of convention arms and, more broadly, of Canada's foreign and defence policies.

Government Orders

The proposed amendments to the Criminal Code and to the Export and Import Permits Act, particularly how the automatic firearms control list will function, are questions best considered in committee. It is for that reason that we in the Official Opposition believe that this bill should now proceed promptly to the committee stage so that the questions it inevitably raises can be dealt with effectively there, taking into account the commercial, the defence and the disarmament considerations that are all involved in the control of Canada's export of conventional weapons.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): There are no questions or comments. The hon. member for Victoria is next on the list. He will have 20 minutes, plus 10 minutes questions and comments.

Mr. John Brewin (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party to address the issues put before the House. The government has introduced this bill to authorize cabinet to waive the provisions in the Criminal Code permitting the import and export of automatic weapons anywhere in the world. That should be understood by the House.

Today we debate second reading, that is approval in principle of this bill. I am fascinated by the statement of the official spokesman for the Liberal Party, that the Liberal Party wants this bill quickly moved to second reading where it can receive technical amendments. The issue before the House today is the principle of this bill. We in the New Democratic Party are firmly and unalterably opposed to this bill which will permit the export of automatic weapons anywhere in the world and runs completely counter to every effort to restrain arms sales: the bane of the existence of humanity in this century.

Just as the government begins an effort or said it was beginning an effort to try to restrain sales, what is one of the first pieces of legislation it brings before the House in this session? It is a bill to permit further export of weapons around the world by Canada.

It is an irony that this bill comes before the House on the same day in which the government has introduced a gun control bill for Canadians. Why is that what is good for Canadians is not good for people who live in Saudi Arabia and other parts of the world?