

Government Orders

I will have to check on the specifics and whether there is a reason the wording in the bill is that way. The countries will have to be on the country control list and it will be those countries with which we have a defence arrangement, as I described in my remarks.

In response to the member from Victoria, we have not completed an arrangement with Saudi Arabia. That would have to be completed before exports would be provided for.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, the most striking thing about Bill C-6, which the Minister for International Trade has just introduced, is that it seems both unnecessary and inopportune.

It appears unnecessary because for more than 13 years the export of conventional weapons has been satisfactorily regulated within the existing terms of the Export and Import Permits Act.

It is surely not beyond the ability of the government's legal counsel to identify ways in which such regulations could continue to be utilized without the cumbersome necessity of Parliament amending legislation which until now had been found satisfactory. In that sense, the bill is inopportune.

In an additional sense it is inopportune. By lumping together questions of the legitimate export of conventional weapons with amendments to the Criminal Code, the general impression is left that somehow such exports, unlike other exports, raise questions that must ultimately be encompassed within the Criminal Code rather than within trade legislation. This inopportune impression will only be reinforced by the fact that the government has also chosen this same day to introduce—or reintroduce—its long awaited gun legislation.

Such juxtapositions of separate policy questions can only be described as unfortunate. With Bill C-6, which essentially addresses an anomaly in the Criminal Code, much larger questions are being opened, questions which were never intended to be covered by the Criminal Code. I have already noted that the fact that exports of conventional weapons are spoken of in the context of the Criminal Code is an unfortunate juxtaposition.

As a result of introducing amendments intended merely to permit the continued sale of small arms to certain nations or the import and re-export of weapons incorporated in Canadian-built vehicles, a range of much more fundamental questions is inevitably raised.

In the past, Canada's policy has been to authorize the export of light weapons—never weapons of mass destruction—to countries designated by a minister upon the recommendation of officials. For example, the sale of Canadian-made automatic weapons or light armoured vehicles has been covered by such policies. Against such a background, Canada exported to NATO allies and other designated countries some of the military equipment necessary for their self-defence.

Aircraft, light weapons, radios and other *matériel* were exported, helping to sustain the equipment of Canadian forces, creating thousands of jobs among suppliers across Canada and, in a number of instances, enhancing Canada's high-tech capabilities, whether in the automotive, marine, communications or aeronautical industries.

• (1100)

Now, however, it seems that an anomaly has been identified in the Criminal Code. We are to understand that since 1978 fully automatic weapons have been classified in the Criminal Code as prohibited weapons and accordingly cannot be either imported or exported under defence contracts. Such a prohibition, it is now discovered, prevents the further export or even the import and re-export of such weapons.

How can this be? Since 1978, such weapons manufactured in Canada have been exported. Similar weapons, manufactured elsewhere for incorporation in Canadian-made vehicles, have been imported and re-exported.

Is the government now saying that any such exports during the past 13 years were in error? Is it saying that those officials and ministers who reviewed and authorized such shipments in the past were acting, unwittingly of course, in contravention of the Criminal Code? If the ministers were not then acting in contravention of the Criminal Code, why would they be doing so today by authorizing identical or similar shipments?

What has occurred that requires the government to introduce these amendments, opening a host of questions which do not belong here but in other debates? What is it that the government has suddenly discovered about the Criminal Code that requires this extraordinary procedure? Is this the way in which to initiate a review of the controls that Canada exercises over the export of arms? Is this the way to back into a debate or discussion of disarmament? Is this yet another instance of the government's lack of a clear policy direction? What