

Government Orders

because it is fundamentally inconsistent with our policy to develop it, to peddle it, to finance it, and then to deplore its use". That is why we are against this bill.

This bill says nothing about the production and sale of arms within Canada. It deals with the export of arms to any country in the world. The bill does not limit cabinet in any way as to the countries that it could be selling arms to. There is no practical limitation. All the cabinet has to do is enter into some kind of arrangement with any tinpot dictator, any violator of human rights, anyone who could turn against us the next day. That is what this bill authorizes and that is what this bill is about.

With respect to the defence industry within Canada, what we have said in this debate and what we will be saying again and again until the lesson gets through to the government is that there is a fundamental problem with engaging in defence production which we must resolve in this country. It is a difficult problem. If we want to make arms for our own forces then we have to think of the ultimate consequences. At the very least we should say we are not going to further weaken the restraints and constraints on arms sales abroad. We should be sitting down across this floor and across this country, having discussions between employers and employees, companies, and the defence industry, and working the answers to this fundamental dilemma.

Mr. John Reimer (Kitchener): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate today on Bill C-6, an act respecting the exporting, importing, manufacturing, buying or selling of, and dealing with certain weapons.

I would like to comment on the nature of this bill, what it is doing, some of the history behind the bill and the stringent controls that are built into it.

In effect this bill will allow Canadian manufacturers of automatic weapons to broaden their marketing efforts to compete for foreign defence contracts. Currently Canadian firms are restricted to selling to Canadian military and police forces only. Under this new act the export of automatic weapons will be subject to a new regime of Canadian government controls, already among the most stringent in the world. It is important to remember when we look at this topic that these are among the most stringent in the world and we are adding to them, not subtracting from them.

A new list called the Automatic Firearms Country Control List will be created. It will set out the names of those countries to which Canadian manufacturers can sell.

• (1140)

Only countries with which Canada has defence, research, development and production bilateral agreements will be eligible for inclusion on that list. Automatic firearms will not be sold to countries that are not included on that list. I want to emphasize that Bill C-6 will help companies such as Diemaco, which is in my riding of Kitchener, become more competitive.

As the Minister for International Trade stated: "I am delighted that the government has seen fit to make these changes at this time. Canadian companies that are only able to rely on domestic orders are in danger of losing their viability. Once the changes are adopted Canadian companies like Diemaco will be able to help our NATO allies and our close defence partners to meet their requirements for small arms".

I would also like to say that my colleague from the neighbouring riding of Cambridge was in the Netherlands last week with the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association. He, too, is pleased with this decision and said that: "The awarding of the international contracts would help keep defence companies viable, thereby allowing the Canadian forces to continue to purchase, repair, and maintain their equipment in Canada, rather than having to seek foreign suppliers".

It is important that under these amendments companies which violate the new regulations could face fines amounting to the total value of the illegal transaction, and officers of such companies could face jail sentences of up to 10 years.

Complementary changes to the Criminal Code have also been introduced. If we look back historically at what has taken place on this issue since January 1, 1978, fully automatic weapons have been classified in the Criminal Code as prohibited weapons. Importation or possession of these fully automatic firearms has, therefore, been illegal except in the case of the Canadian Forces or Canadian police.