

purchase and possession of sporting ammunition. This misinterpretation of the intent may have been related to a proposed change in the wording of the definition "explosive" and the proposal to delete the term "safety cartridge". However, these were both housekeeping changes and had no relationship to our general intent to introduce tighter controls over blasting explosives. If there is still any doubt concerning these two items we will be pleased to provide more specific information on the changes during hearings in committee.

Representation has also been made to remove such items as sporting ammunition, propellants, flares and fuses from the explosives classification, on the basis that these items are not really explosive in nature. We are the first to agree that a box of shot shells is not as hazardous, from the standpoint of a mass explosion, as a case of dynamite. However, the propellant used in ammunition is made up of high explosive such as nitrocellulose, often in combination with nitroglycerine, and the primers contain explosive ingredients common to detonators. So the manufacture of ammunition is obviously an explosives operation subject to control under the act.

I believe concern was also expressed that, as a result of provisions in this bill, the hand loading of ammunition would not be possible as it would be considered illegal manufacture. There is no change in this bill respecting manufacture, and the reloading of ammunition on private premises is already recognized and approved in the present regulations.

Another matter which prompted some discussion concerned ammonium nitrate. Of course this is a well known chemical which is widely used as a fertilizer. It is also a common ingredient in explosives. In fact some grades of dynamite, as well as many of the water gel and slurry explosives, contain over 60 per cent of ammonium nitrate. In addition, a common blasting agent used mainly in open pit mines and quarries is composed of approximately 94 per cent ammonium nitrate and 6 per cent fuel oil. However, despite its widespread use as an essential ingredient in explosives, ammonium nitrate is not classed as an explosive for the purposes of the Explosives Act unless it is (a) made, manufactured or used as an explosive, or (b) it is stored with other explosives. The reason for this latter requirement is that ammonium nitrate can be made to detonate under the stimulus of a suitable primer such as a stick of dynamite.

Finally, I would like to review the department's position in connection with the application and administration of the act and regulations. The Explosives Act is fundamentally concerned with public safety. The areas of responsibility include manufacture, authorization, storage, sale, importation, transportation by road, and by this bill will additionally include the purchase, possession and use of fireworks and blasting explosives.

The agency directly responsible for the administration of the act is the explosives division of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. The division is comprised of a small group of trained explosives specialists, including the chief inspector, his assistant and seven inspectors. This group attends to the administration of the act as it applies to approximately 68 factories which annually produce in excess of 250,000 tons of commercial blasting

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explosives, several million detonators, large quantities of blasting accessories, sporting ammunition, industrial explosives, fireworks and military explosives. The division is also involved in additional duties related to the storage, handling, sale and distribution of these explosives. The division is not staffed to police the industry but rather to advise and educate. The policy of the department as it applies to the administration of the act is to persuade those people who handle explosives that it is in their best interests to comply with the safety requirements.

This gives a general review of the proposed amendments to the act which, as I indicated, have been based primarily on a wish to tighten up the policing and control of industrial explosives and to tidy up certain aspects of the bill from a technical and legal standpoint. I shall look forward to the opportunity of hearing the comments of other hon. members on this bill, and to having a very full discussion of the proposed changes and hearing other comments when it goes before the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works.

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, I merely wish to indicate that we on this side certainly concur with this bill having second reading. We had some questions regarding the effects the bill might have on sportsmen and the use of ammunition. These have been answered by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Foster), but I would enter the caveat that we reserve the right to examine the bill in committee to ensure that in fact the law substantiates what the parliamentary secretary indicated to the House.

I also have some concern about the effect of some of the new regulations on farmers and their operations, and the fact that regulations might prevent the efficient use of explosives by farmers who may require to use them in their operations. But bearing in mind the fact that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) has demonstrated that he is always willing to listen to and accept positive amendments from the opposition, I am sure we can pass this bill through committee in short order.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the parliamentary secretary for his remarks and I express my appreciation to the government of the changes made in this bill which, in my opinion, make it much more acceptable than the previous bill.

One of the fears we had about the last bill was that by tightening control over the sale of safety cartridges and magazines we would in fact eliminate hunting in much of the country. I am pleased to note that the parliamentary secretary, who comes from the same part of Canada as I do, has taken that into consideration. I am more than pleased about the changes which are taking place. We were opposed to the previous bill and its deficiencies in respect of the handling of explosives.

● (2100)

I agree entirely with the parliamentary secretary when he says that for a long time we have had a great number of factories that have been able to produce sophisticated types of explosives without any major disaster or accident.