

Government Orders

• (1600)

On February 20, the Secretary of State for External Affairs said, and I quote from his speech in London, England: "I believe it is imperative that the world declare that there be no Middle East arms bazaar. Ninety-five per cent of the weapons in the hands of Saddam Hussein came from the five permanent members of the Security Council". He repeated the statement of the Prime Minister that he would request a world summit on the control of arms.

Just yesterday, President Bush of the United States announced an ambitious plan to curb unnecessary and destabilizing weapons in the Middle East, including a freeze on a nuclear weapons program and an eventual ban on all missiles throughout the region. Even the President of the United States sees the need for curtailing the sale of weapons into the Middle East.

We, as a party, are proposing that certain restrictions be written into this legislation so that weapons of this kind could not be sold to any country whatsoever, especially to countries in areas of conflict and countries with serious human rights abuses. When the time comes, we will be extending that principle in a legislative way to all weapons that would be sold by this country. We now sell weapons to allies, countries with which we have collective security arrangements for defensive purposes and for peacekeeping. We, as a party, would like to see this put in a policy statement or in legislation for the House.

A country that we can look to in this sort of thing is Sweden, because Sweden is one of the largest arms producers in the world. It has very large arms producers in the names of Bofors Saab, and so on. I have here a copy of Sweden's policy on arms exports in the English language, 1989 version.

It is expressing Swedish policy. It says: "The general view has been that for reasons of security, Sweden should permit a certain volume of arms exports, but that we should at the same time be restrictive in our choice of recipient countries so as not to risk compromising Sweden's policy of non alignment by becoming involved in other country's military conflicts". It goes on. The Swedes have put into legislation certain guidelines which prevent them from selling to certain countries and allow them to sell to certain other countries, more or less along the same lines of the policies I have already referred to.

If you have a policy controlling the arms trade, that must go in hand with another policy dealing with disarmament. Some countries, especially Third World countries, get their arms from more developed countries, but the developed countries manufacture the arms for themselves. We must not only stop the trade of arms to Third World countries and countries which do not have their own industries, but we must also make sure that those countries which produce arms disarm themselves in an effective way so that there is balance in the world.

An arms trade policy must go hand in hand with a disarmament policy and also go hand in hand with a policy of conversion. By conversion I mean a policy whereby we assist industries which have been in the arms business to convert to more peaceful types of production.

In conclusion, let me say that we cannot support this bill in its present form. We will vote against it. If it is passed by the majority in this House and sent to committee, we will propose amendments to put limits on the list of countries that can buy weapons from Canada and to oblige that list and any addition to the list to be sent to a committee of this House for examination and approval.

That is our policy with respect to this bill.

Mr. Dan Heap (Trinity—Spadina): I am very glad that the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce has taken part in the debate because I always want to hear what he says. On most matters, I find myself very much in agreement with him. I also find that he is a person who speaks his mind without fear.

However, I have one question for him on the basis of what he said. I understand that he and his colleagues in the Liberal caucus will oppose this bill in its present form. Further, if it is carried on second reading and referred to committee, it will seek an amendment in the committee to limit the countries to which the cabinet would be able to approve the sale of these weapons, and require these countries to meet criteria somewhat in line with criteria that were used by this government and the previous Liberal government, although they were never brought to Parliament to be approved.

In fact, I would add that when members of Parliament inquired of this government or the Liberal government which countries were on that list, they were always told