

Government Orders

ping; and the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona—Edmonton International Airport.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Trinity—Spadina.

[English]

Mr. Dan Heap (Trinity—Spadina): Mr. Speaker, before I begin the debate I would like to ask if you could point out to me that there is a member of the cabinet in attendance here as the Standing Orders require.

I saw a couple before, but I do not see any member of the cabinet now. One member has returned.

The hon. minister has indicated that he wants to hear what I have to say and I am very glad of that. As he may suspect, I will be opposing this bill.

The purpose of this bill is to allow the export from Canada of automatic weapons and light-armoured vehicles armed with automatic weapons. The export of automatic weapons is now prohibited by the Criminal Code.

The bill provides in section 8 for an exemption to the code in cases approved by cabinet.

Section 8 in effect would permit the export or import of automatic weapons or components if approved by cabinet notwithstanding the other prohibitions in the code, so long as they were sent to countries which were on an approved list for the export of automatic weapons or components, and it authorizes the minister to create that list and to issue the export permits.

That is what it is about. Some of my colleagues have gone into some of the reasons for objecting to this bill, often quoting statements of this government which are in contradiction to the purpose of this bill in connection with the arms trade.

I want to go just a little bit deeper into the matter to discuss basic reasons for opposing this bill. Basically I would say that in our time, the arms trade is immoral. It is immoral because it is trade in the means of coercion; that is to say, a means of controlling people by violence or threat of violence. Means of coercion are sold by the owners of coercive power to other owners of coercive

power for the sole purpose of coercing people by violence or threat of violence.

This government and its predecessor, the Liberal government, in spite of having some alleged guidelines which were not made public, sold arms to the dictator of Indonesia, the dictator of Chile, and the dictator of Philippines, all of whom used arms against their own people.

If the Liberal amendment suggested were to be adopted in this bill, I would look at it with great interest to see which of the countries that either the Liberal government or the present Conservative government sold arms to would be excluded.

What we have here is a situation that was lampooned by Mark Twain in his novel *Tom Sawyer Abroad*. Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn and their friends are travelling around the world in a balloon. They pass across the Sahara Desert and they look down and see bodies lying in the desert. They bring the balloon down and investigate. It looks like a caravan that had been covered over in a sand storm and smothered. People had been killed. Another wind had blown the sand off and the bodies lay where they had fallen with their clothes, their weapons, their money and their jewels.

Tom Sawyer, the leader of the group, gives a judgment: "It's our duty to take that money and those jewels, because if we don't, someone might come along and steal them". Mark Twain was writing at the time when the United States was taking some of the colonies from the Spanish empire, such as Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico and so on.

That is the basic argument used now for the arms trade. Nobody seriously believes that we need it to defend Canada from an attacker. The argument is: if we do not sell it, somebody else will, and therefore it is our duty to sell it.

I am saying that this is immoral at the present time, because I did not always think so. I have had an individual struggle of conscience on this for a great many years. I came from a conventional family. My brother served in the navy. My uncle served in World War I and was gassed in a gas attack in France, and later served in Palestine. It was more or less taken for granted that when there is a war, able bodied young men join up.