

Government Orders

This is the time to begin to turn around the whole inevitable race toward the escalation of arms sales. When we begin seeing what happens with this bill and we look back at the developments over the last number of years, we begin to see how the government will be back in a few years with yet another arms sale and another arms sale.

Here is how it works. The minister referred to the fact that Diemaco was started by DND in 1976.

• (1120)

It was supported initially as a producer of arms supplies for the Canadian forces. Most Canadians would support that initiative, but what all of us should have realized and must now realize is the down escalator that displaces our economy and our community.

Once a company finishes producing arms for the Canadian Armed Forces, which in the world scale of things is relatively small, it then is faced with a choice. It either stops the production altogether, or seeks new markets. To stop production means a loss of jobs. Obviously, everybody starts looking for new markets. The first and most automatic is the United States with which we have a defence production sharing agreement. We sell a certain amount of the weapons to the United States, but after a period of time the United States' market dries up. We then look to our "allies" in Europe and other places. We begin seeing what arms we can flog to them.

That is what has happened in the case of the light armoured vehicles. That is what has happened in the case of automatic weapons. We have run out of our own markets. We have run out of American markets. We have run out of European markets, so now we start turning to the Third World. We start with a country like Saudi Arabia with which our government has relatively friendly relations, notwithstanding its human rights record and its place right in the heart of one of the most turbulent and tense regions of the world.

What about next week? What about next year, when the Saudi Arabian deal runs out? Where are these companies going to start looking? They will be back with the same argument, but now they will be looking for less and less savory regimes, such as El Salvador or South Korea where they may need arms to turn on the students.

Where next? Iraq? The government will make a case, and the case will be exactly the same as the case brought by the minister before this House today. The case will be that notwithstanding the human rights record, notwithstanding the tensions in the regions, notwithstanding our policies about arms control and notwithstanding the human cost that will ultimately result from this, we have to do this because of jobs.

The time has come to say "stop." The time has come to begin looking at alternatives, for ways in which this country and our people can earn their living. We have a program, DIPP, Defence Industry Production Program. Those funds should begin being used now to divert military equipment and military production to civilian production.

The whole direction of government policy must shift and it must be done in consultation with the communities and the workers involved. We must begin a serious program of conversion so that we no longer find ourselves in the invidious position that this escalator has put us on.

Mr. Speaker, let me refer you to the article by John Lamb who is executive director of the Arms Control Centre. He writes about this very deal.

The record of the government over the long period of time has been eroding step by step by step. Since the 1930s, Canada had a very restrictive arms export policy, but in the 1970s, under a Liberal government, this policy began being reversed. First, it was decided that in future, commercial considerations would be taken into account in the evaluation of export permit applications. Then the onus on who should make the sale was reversed. In the 1980s sales were being approved which had previously been turned down. By 1986 we were selling to known human rights violators and now we are on the slippery slope.

Let me finish by referring the House to a number of very wise comments, the first by Surgeon M. Keeny, Jr. in the Arms Control Association article called Focus in which he concludes:

The New World Order should not be inaugurated with a massive buildup of sophisticated conventional arms in this most dangerous, unstable, and unpredictable region.

He was referring to the Middle East.

In such a world, the president's "level playing field" would soon become the "floor of the jungle."