

An alternative, which could be in hon. members' minds, would have been to permit certain quantities and types of military equipment to go to Israel during this period of tension and to allow nothing whatsoever to go to any Arab state in any circumstances. That would, of course, have been considered as an unfriendly policy by those states with which Canada has normal diplomatic relations. Neither this policy nor that of the complete embargo for both sides has, so far as I know, been adopted by any country. Indeed a policy of control which has been adopted by the United Kingdom, the United States and France, the policy which has been accepted by the free world, is that which we ourselves are now following.

Another important principle which we have followed is that of consultation and exchange of information about orders and requests—except those of no significance in quantity or nature—with certain governments who have special responsibilities in this field. We do that so that one country may know what the others are doing and thereby ensure that so far as possible the principles that I have mentioned above are adhered to.

If, for instance, we are asked to supply some ammunition for 25-pounders for a particular country—and we have been asked for that, and it is still before Cabinet—we try to find out, before taking any action, not only whether such an order would be excessive having regard to the number of guns involved, and existing stocks, but whether orders for this ammunition have also been received by other governments. The responsibility for the decision, however, is of course ours.

Now, what is the procedure by which this policy is carried out?

Under the law, as I have said, the export permit must be given by the Minister of Trade and Commerce. Before doing so, if the destination is one of those 34 sensitive areas where consultation is required, he consults with both the Departments of National Defence and External Affairs and acts only after agreement with those two departments. If the application is a particularly significant one, either in quantity or because of the political circumstances surrounding it, and even though the three ministers may have agreed to the permit, the matter is referred to the whole Cabinet.

In the case of shipments to NATO or most Commonwealth countries, the Minister of Trade and Commerce may act after consultation only with the Department of National Defence, in order to make sure that security and supply factors are considered as well as our own defence requirements.

In all cases where government surplus supplies are involved, the matter must also go to the Treasury Board for approval. Even after there has been ministerial agreement on an export permit, that board, a committee of the Cabinet, may also ask the full Cabinet to reconsider a decision taken.