

Government Orders

I would like to comment briefly that I think there has been a tremendous loss which Canada as a country has faced because of our decision to follow the United States to the Persian Gulf. Since the Korean War, we, as a country, have always seen for ourselves our fundamental and basic role in the world to be that of peacekeeping. With the decision to take an active part in the military role that has been established in the Persian Gulf, we have seriously hurt our credibility in the future as a country that will be acceptable in peacekeeping situations, such as Cyprus and the Middle East, itself.

It is very easy with some kind of gung-ho patriotism to say to the United States, as the Conservatives used to say to Britain: "Ready, aye, ready." It is dangerous, not so much because in this case we will be caught up in battle, although that may happen, but dangerous because the number of countries in the world that are committed to peace and to using peacekeeping as a mechanism to solve problems is reduced if we withdraw from that task which we have seen for ourselves in the past.

I hope very much, Mr. Speaker, that across the country there will be a rethinking of the commitment to take military action in the Persian Gulf. I hope that we will see ourselves as the world's peacekeepers and recognize that means that we do not get involved in these kinds of potentially very active conflicts of an armed sort.

Would my colleague agree with that position?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Trinity—Spadina has a couple of minutes to wind up.

Mr. Heap: Mr. Speaker, I thank my seat-mate for the question. I hope he will not feel I am ungrateful if I do not entirely agree with him. We may have to sort this out outside.

I do not think we have lost our status and our standing in people's eyes as peacemakers. I think we made a mistake sending the ships. They were sent there. Now it is done. I think it was a mistake, but I do not think the world will refuse to forgive us for one relatively small mistake, and so far, not a harmful one.

I have said that we do not need to act as though we were pure, like the man who was invited by Jesus to cast the first stone, and there was not anybody found to do that. We do not need to be self-righteous. We could

admit we made a mistake and back off. I think our record over the years would stand us very well.

I am particularly proud of what I saw when I was in Nicaragua in February, at the time of the election there, and the work that the United Nations had done to ensure, for the first time in most of those countries, a peaceful transition from a military dictatorship to a civilian rule of a different party. That is what the United Nations did for Nicaragua and the Nicaraguan people of both points of view are grateful for it. I believe that Canadian being participants in that still have a good record, but we should not damage it any further than we have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. On debate, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear at the beginning of my speech that I fully support that part of the government's resolution which condemns the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.

We must be opposed to any unilateral military action which serves the sole interest of one country, in this case, the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. But we must be consistent with that principle, and whereas it was wrong for Iraq to invade Kuwait, it was also wrong in previous years for the United States to invade Grenada, and for the Soviet Union to invade Afghanistan. It was also wrong for the United States to fund the Contras so it could then invade Nicaragua, and for the Americans at the same time to set up a unilateral, economic blockade against the very small and struggling country of Nicaragua.

All those actions were wrong. They are all unilateral, military actions by a bigger power against the smaller country and done in the self interests of those countries. So, Mr. Speaker, while it is right to condemn the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, I must say that it does not help the United States' case that it has carried out similar military actions in the past, nor the Soviet Union's, as I said, who made similar invasions in the past.

• (1640)

We should all hope this incident in the Middle East would lead to a new attitude by the superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union—and other powerful countries, that we must never use unilateral, military