

Special Debate

Humanitarian action is one of the responsibilities of the international community. I recently attended a forum in Sainte-Adèle, north of Montreal, in which experts tried to link state sovereignty with the responsibility to take action against gross violations of human rights. We are moving toward the right to interfere, and the international community will have to come to terms with this in the future.

Of course, we have a number of reservations about the presence of peacekeepers over there. My colleagues talked about the psychological trauma experienced by our soldiers after or before they return home. I suppose that the Canadian Forces could do a number of things, perhaps better choose the soldiers or prepare them better. However, I do not think we can base our refusal to get involved on this factor, as tragic as it may be.

We often hear Canadians say that we cannot afford to intervene. May I remind this House that Canada spends \$10 billion on national defence. I think it is a false argument to say that we cannot afford it.

The Canadian Forces should look for a new orientation. In the report on the policy statement, we suggested that the government review the make-up of the Canadian Armed Forces. Since peacekeeping is really what we are best at and are involved in on a regular basis, the whole National Defence structure should focus on this new make-up.

Mr. Speaker, I am out of time. But I would just like to remind the House that, if people are able to fight and kill one another, it is because there are others out there who are manufacturing weapons. In that regard, I want to denounce the fact that four permanent members of the Security Council manufacture 80 per cent of all weapons produced in the world. We will never denounce enough this kind of hypocrisy.

I will conclude with a quote from the Leader of the Opposition who stated on January 25, 1994: "what matters for the moment is to bear in mind that we must continue, insofar as our capabilities allow it, to fulfil our fair part of the obligations that result from our allegiance to the values of democracy, peace and justice, values which, given their universality, deserve our efforts to further them abroad".

• (2100)

[English]

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to join in the debate tonight on a subject of utmost concern and importance, especially to the people of Etobicoke—Lakeshore and indeed to all Canada.

In light of the UN Security Council consideration of renewed mandates for UN forces in the former Yugoslavia and of the

coming rotation of Canadian forces serving with UNPROFOR in the region, it is important that we have the debate tonight.

We live in a global village and very often the events that occur in the international community have a direct or indirect effect on Canada. We have seen evidence of this in the economy, in our social policy and in issues of security. We have a responsibility to the global village, especially when human rights are being violated.

The importance of peacekeeping to Canadians is obvious from the three times since January 1994 that the government has called a special debate on Canada's role as a peacekeeper throughout the world. In the past year we have dealt specifically with our commitments to UN missions in Rwanda, in Haiti and in the former Yugoslavia.

In the debates that took place members consistently referred with pride to previous Canadian participation in UN peacekeeping missions in Korea, Egypt, Vietnam, the Middle East and Latin America, to name a few.

Numerous members of the Etobicoke—Lakeshore community have been involved in peacekeeping activities around the world since the inception of the UN peacekeeping force. Their contribution to the security of our country and to peace in the world is something that my constituents and I will always be grateful for.

Described as an imaginative worker for peace, Lester B. Pearson received the Nobel Peace Prize for his leadership in bringing about the creation of the UN peacekeeping force. Canada has a proud history of participation in peacekeeping operations both under UN and non-UN auspices. Few if any countries have a more impressive record of dedicated and professional contribution to this essential activity.

Nowhere have dedication and professionalism been more evident than with our Canadian peacekeepers currently providing relief to the victims of the war in the former Yugoslavia. Some 2,080 Canadian troops now monitor UN protected areas in Croatia, provide protection for relief convoys and refugees in Bosnia—Hercegovina, and monitor ceasefire agreements in both countries.

Canada has supported the participation of its forces in this UN mission to promote peaceful settlement and to provide relief to its many victims. As one of the largest contingents to the UN protection force Canadians have selflessly put themselves in danger by undertaking difficult assignments. Service women and men have participated in the European community monitor mission and non-UN mission overseeing the ceasefire throughout the former Yugoslavia and were instrumental in opening Sarajevo airport for the delivery of humanitarian relief supplies.

Canada has also provided a ship to sanction enforcement operations in the Adriatic Sea and has deployed a naval support ship and the Aurora maritime patrol aircraft to this effort. In