

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Late this morning the Canadian Press reported that the minister told the parliamentary committee that "Canada is ready to use force to get Iraq out of Kuwait, even without United Nations approval".

Why is the government contemplating using force against Iraq in this way without a United Nations resolution? Is this not a break with Canadian tradition and contrary to the spirit of the resolution adopted by this House and the letters the minister has sent to the external affairs critics of both opposition parties?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and his party would do the House and, I think, the public of Canada a service if, instead of simply relying upon newspaper condensations of a committee hearing, they would consult with the members of their own caucus who were present at that committee hearing.

I made the point, which I think was generally agreed to by members of all parties in that very useful, calm, non-partisan joint session of the committees on national defence and external affairs this morning, that Canada has two principal goals. One of those principal goals is to have the resolutions of the United Nations accepted and to have Iraq out of Kuwait. Another of those principal goals is to use the United Nations and to operate under the auspices of the United Nations. We hope that we can accomplish both together.

We certainly do not want to leave Saddam Hussein in any doubt at all about the determination of Canada to support the resolutions that we have supported in the United Nations. We know that Saddam Hussein understands only the language of strength. There has been an unprecedented demonstration of strength. We do not want to give him any reason to believe that there will suddenly be some weakening of that strength.

On Canada's part there will not be, and so what we are seeking to achieve here, in support of resolutions of the Security Council, is a demonstration to Saddam Hussein that the only alternative open to him is to move back from Kuwait. That is the best opportunity to give peace a chance. That is the policy of Canada.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, if there is to be the kind of use of force the minister spoke of in the committee this morning, I ask him: Who will make this decision? Will it be the United Nations? Will it be the United States itself? Will it be Canada? Canadians deserve and need to know the answer to that question today.

• (1420)

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, that question or one very similar to it was put and answered in the standing committee this morning. I am sorry the Leader of the Opposition did not have the opportunity to consult with the members of his party who were active, constructive, non-partisan participants in that committee session this morning.

I have written to my colleagues in the House, the hon. member from Winnipeg and the member from Burnaby. I have indicated to them that if there is some change in the circumstances of decisions the Government of Canada has to take we will seek to consult Parliament and, if consultation is not possible, to advise Parliament.

I made it clear in the committee today that decisions as to changes in policy that Canada might have to contemplate will naturally be taken by the cabinet of Canada. We cannot always wait. Events do not always wait for us to come to Parliament to consult as to whether or not we should respond to a situation that, to quote the member from Newfoundland, his defence critic, "can hot up very quickly". His defence critic understands that. I hope that the hon. Leader of the Opposition might talk to his defence critic.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the Secretary of State for External Affairs that I am asking the questions I am asking today precisely because I have consulted with my colleague, the lead External Affairs critic for the Official Opposition, as will be very clear when he gets the floor after I complete my questions.