

Oral Questions

United Nations and elsewhere if, per chance, there is a veto by one nation, one member of the Security Council. We do not intend to have the broadly supported position of Canada on this question under-cut by a potential veto by some other country in the United Nations. Surely that is sensible.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the same minister on the same subject. It is reported that Secretary of State Baker has been visiting a number of senior government officials in those countries which are participating in the multinational force to determine in fact if they are prepared to engage in offensive actions against the Iraqis in Kuwait.

I want to ask the Secretary of State if, in fact, he has had those consultations yet with Secretary Baker or are such consultations planned, and does the Secretary of State intend to make Canada's position clear, that we do not want to participate in any offensive action against the Iraqis and will give sanctions a proper and long-term opportunity to work their way out and force the Iraqis to withdraw without the use of force.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it may be some help if I quote the words of Mr. Baker as they appeared in the *Sunday Gazette*:

"The overall purpose of the trip is to discuss, with our coalition partners, strengthening the full range of measures that we have taken to isolate Saddam Hussein—and thereby to lay the foundation for the possible—execution of all options,"—

Certainly, from Canada's point of view, the option that we prefer is an option that demonstrates enough strength to Saddam Hussein that he, peacefully, leaves Kuwait. That is the purpose of our policy; that is the policy that we have been pursuing actively.

Is there consultation with the United States? Of course there is, as there is with the other countries, the broad array of countries, 25 of which have troops of one form or another in the region, a wide range of which are associated through the Security Council and other actions of the United Nations.

Will there be debate in this House? There was debate in this House. There was the recommendation from this House that the matter should be carried on to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade. It was before that committee that my colleague, the Minister of National Defence, and I

appeared. We are prepared to come again. The Ambassador to the United Nations will be there. We certainly are going to take every step we can to ensure that Parliament is fully involved in the discussion of this issue. We have been doing that; we intend to continue to do that. We intend to have Canada meet its international obligations.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, we would still like to know whether in fact Canada has been directly engaged in this round of consultations with Secretary of State Baker because it seems that with the impending U.S. Congressional elections, that would be a very major turning point. Would the Secretary of State would answer that question?

I also wish he would respond to the plea that was contained in yesterday's *Calgary Herald* in a letter written by a Canadian nationalist who is being detained in Iraq who said that he feels betrayed because we have not sent a special envoy.

• (1510)

I ask the minister if the government has now decided whether to take some special actions, such as sending a delegation, or would it be asking the Secretary General of the UN whether he would undertake to go to Iraq and make the case to free the foreign nationals presently detained by the Iraqi government?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am in regular touch with the foreign ministers of other countries which are involved in the large coalition of nations that want to have Saddam Hussein leave Kuwait.

Second, with respect to persons who are there against their will, we naturally want to have them freed. I have indicated privately to the hon. member, and I think publicly on other occasions, that there will not be an official mission on the part of Canada to seek the release of these persons because we think that would be used for propaganda purposes by the Saddam Hussein regime.

I am aware that there is consideration being given by some persons respecting unofficial trips. I think we would want to consider carefully whether public discussion of the possibility of unofficial envoys will speed up or slow up the return to Canada of Canadians who want to leave Iraq and cannot now.