

Government Orders

The clear implication of that resolution is that military force is not justified if sanctions still have the potential to work. I say "only the potential to work" for there is no certainty in these matters.

Until sanctions have demonstrably failed, as they clearly have not, it is counter to the charter. It is counter to resolution 678. It is counter to the experience of this generation, to the people of this century. It is counter to simple humanity that war can be even contemplated in the Middle East at this time.

Our people therefore ask: "How did we get here? How did it happen?" I suggest—and I try to use these words calmly—that the United States has blackmailed the countries of the United Nations into wrapping the U.S. actions and policy in this area in the flag of the United Nations. The U.S. has made it absolutely clear to its friends that if the United Nations did not provide at least a fig leaf of support, the U.S. would go it alone.

It is clear that the United States made the decision in November that it was going to war in the gulf and nothing would stop it, despite all the efforts of the world community.

Now we sit at the brink of war. This House has only one choice on the resolution before it. This House must vote against war in the Middle East. We urge the House to treat this as a free vote. We do so solemnly and understand its significance.

This is an historic vote. This is a vote that will put our young men and women to war. It is a vote that has only taken place twice before in the history of Canada; in 1939 and again in 1950. It is a vote in which all members must express themselves as they honestly and clearly believe.

In order to make our position as clear as we possibly can, it will be my intention in a second to move a subamendment to the Liberal amendment which effectively would have Canada not go into offensive military action at this time. It leaves open the possibility that tomorrow, the next day, the day after that, Canada could participate in offensive military action.

The word "offensive" in the Liberal amendment has been already defined by the military in this country, and I suspect by the government, as referring precisely to attacks on enemy positions and does not include the support of attacks on enemy positions.

Government spokespeople have said that is defensive action, that it is defensive to accompany B-52 bombers on an attack on Iraq or Kuwait. To make it absolutely clear, I will move the following amendment:

That the amendment be amended by deleting all the words after the word "sanctions" and substituting the following:

"such support to exclude the involvement by Canada in a military attack on Iraq or Iraqi forces in Kuwait".

I would ask the House to give this subamendment its serious consideration, and I would ask all members of the House to support it.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Madam Speaker, perhaps I could have a few short minutes of the time of the House to comment, if I might, and make a commentary on the subamendment proposed by our colleagues in the NDP. Of course we agree with many of the sentiments: their concern about the use of military action and the real demand that sanctions be applied.

However, I want to make clear why we will have to vote against the amendment. The hon. member cited the charter. We have based much of our argument on the charter as well. We have said that if there is ever to be a policeman role in this world, it has to be through the United Nations and according to the rules set out by the UN charter.

The hon. member properly cited article 41 of the charter when he indicated that the United Nations has the right to establish an economic embargo. Article 42 of the charter then goes on to say that when that embargo, in the judgment of the Security Council, is no longer effective in deterring aggression, the Security Council has the right to call upon members to participate in a military force organized by the UN under the UN command and under the UN flag.

We have been arguing in this House that if there were ever to be use of force against the Iraqis to expel them from Kuwait, it must be within the proper procedures and rules of the United Nations charter.

That is why the amendment we proposed was very careful in its wording at this time, because there may come such an occasion, which we cannot predict or prophesy. There could be other attacks upon other countries. No one can tell what will be in the mind of Saddam Hussein. He certainly has been somewhat unpredictable up to now. We do not want to totally exclude that possibility forever.