

*Oral Questions***PEACEKEEPING**

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, after years of peacekeeping under very difficult circumstances our ground troops are finally coming home from Bosnia. Our troops have done the very best job possible and all Canadians are extremely proud of them.

While the government blasted the Reform Party for suggesting a withdrawal, when the UN told it the same thing last night it immediately fell into line. Now that our troops are coming home will the Prime Minister guarantee that before Canada commits to any future missions Parliament will be allowed to establish a clear set of criteria for all future military commitments?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian soldiers in the former Yugoslavia for the last three years have performed an excellent duty. That is recognized by everybody.

The United Nations decided the battalion in Visoko is not needed any more because it is within an area completely controlled by the Bosnian government. We will repatriate its members with pleasure and thank them for a job extremely well done.

We were there because the UN asked us to be there. Now the UN says they do not need to be there any more, and so we will bring the troops back to Canada.

For the first time ever we have had debate on this in the House of Commons. I have seen the Reform Party change its position two or three times since the beginning. For our part we have always been behind the UN and behind the Canadian soldiers who are considered the best there.

Now the mission is over. We are happy. The troops will be back in Canada with the satisfaction of having accomplished an excellent job in Visoko. We are all proud of them in Canada.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the mandate in Bosnia disappeared months ago. We have been calling for the withdrawal for months now. Canadians are demanding to know before they commit to these sorts of missions what they will cost.

They want to know how long we will be there. They want to know whether we can deliver the mandate being given to us. They want to know whether we will be part of the decision making process or whether we will simply be followers.

Can the Prime Minister tell Canadians the government has learned a lesson from this mission and that it will promise to let

Parliament be involved and have a free vote on developing criteria for peacekeeping?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the mandate we accepted in February after a debate in the House of Commons was until the end of this month.

We respected the mandate. The UN now says it does not need the Canadian troops because it wants to reduce the number. We are happy because if we bring them back to Canada they will be better off.

Canada is always available when people are in very difficult circumstances, when there is misery and when people have been killed to protect families, children and so on. We have always been there. We will do it again and there will be a debate in the House of Commons.

The peacekeeping mission was created by the Canadian government. The peacekeepers who are so well known in the world were created by Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, my predecessor as leader of the Liberal Party. It was done at the time of the war of Great Britain and France against Egypt. He had the guts for the good of the peace of the world to say to the British and the French that war had to stop.

It is in the tradition of Lester B. Pearson that we are making our decision in relation to the UN.

• (1430)

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I think this is typical of how the government reacts to issues. It is in the past. It lives in the past. It gives us a history lesson. What we really need to do is look to the future. The 21st century is coming. It is going to be different. The old line politics will not work any more.

The government is trying to claim victory on the backs of a decision made by the UN. It is about time that it admitted that we need these criteria, that people are demanding these criteria, and that people are really interested in this.

I wonder if the Prime Minister will be just like the last government and do things in secret and then try to somehow rubberstamp them by bringing them here after the decision is made.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can see how desperate they are.

The member talks about the past. Yes, the past was last week when the Minister of Foreign Affairs made a very important speech at the United Nations recommending the modernization of the United Nations. What the hon. member should do to complete his education is read the speech of the minister.