

Oral Questions

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister for External Relations.

The Middle East crisis is costing the Third World tens of billions of dollars. It is obvious, in light of this weekend's summit, for children to link the impact of this crisis to the rapidly deteriorating condition of the world's children. This government's cutbacks to Official Development Assistance have worsened the plight of the world's children.

Will this government announce today a reversal of its cutback policy which has sent a signal to the world that we do not care?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Monique Landry (Minister for External Relations): Mr. Speaker, in the first part of her statement, my hon. colleague referred to the Gulf crisis and to the impact of this crisis on children and displaced people in the affected area. She knows how quick the government was to help foreign nationals caught in the area return in their country of origin and to tend to their immediate needs, by the contributions announced. I do share the concern she expressed in her question for the world's children. She knows full well that this government is presently contributing substantially to the well-being of the world's children through its CIDA programs, especially through its policies, as well as through the work of non governmental organizations aimed at helping the most destitute people better the conditions they live in. My hon. colleague can rest assured that this government will keep providing assistance to the children in the Third World.

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[*English*]

PERSIAN GULF

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

Today, as Canadian ships arrive in the gulf, Mr. Shevardnadze of the Soviet Union has warned us that war could break out at any moment. Indeed, it is Mr. Shevardnadze who is leading the effort to have a UN commanded military operation in the gulf.

Why is Canada not leading the effort to have a UN commanded military operation in the gulf? What is our position on the options put forward by Mr. Shevardnadze?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should be aware that even though this latest enunciation by Mr. Shevardnadze is appreciated, the Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr. Fortier, has been working diligently over the last several weeks to bring about a unification of the military effort under control of the United Nations.

I am sure the hon. member does not believe that we should wait until that effort has been successful to bring about the force of Canada, along with approximately 26 other countries in the world, to enforce the sanctions of the United Nations and to deter aggression.

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that Canada's voice is heard loud and clear in the community of nations now, as it has been in the past, for a UN commanded operation. I want an assurance from the minister that privately and publicly on a UN commanded operation that we will speak out loud and clear so that if in the regrettable circumstances that war breaks out our forces will be part of a UN commanded operation.

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I do have some difficulty with my colleague's question. I understand his concern and appreciate his support, but he has yet to answer me. Does he believe that Canada should not be involved, as we are with some 25 other nations in the world, enforcing the sanctions under 665 under the authority of the United Nations?

Mr. Rompkey: In a UN commanded operation.

Mr. McKnight: Yes, the hon. member is saying that he agrees Canada should be enforcing those sanctions. I thank him for his support.

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NATIONAL CHILD CARE PROGRAM

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago today the Royal Commission on the Status of Women released its comprehensive and excellent recommendations.