

Government Orders

to bring clarity to the situation and let people know everything which can be done is actually being done.

I conclude by stating that we need to recommit our troops to their involvement in Bosnia but not necessarily under present conditions. We must also commit to ensuring members of the military are properly and adequately trained, that UN field operations are politically supported by member nations. We must commit to provide the support needed to reduce risk.

As well both the government and the military need to communicate their purpose and decisions clearly so that everyone is aware of the objectives for both our troops in Bosnia specifically and UN forces generally. We will be holding future debates about Canada's military and peacekeeping roles. It is my hope that the precedent has been established for these debates.

I salute forces both now and in the past which served Canada for what will soon be 50 years in the area of peacekeeping. I also salute the families and friends of those involved in peacekeeping missions. I am sure they join me in acknowledging the excellence of our Canadian troops. Their excellence is why Canada's role in Bosnia is so critical.

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am indeed honoured to address the House today on behalf of the riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore. I think the people of Etobicoke—Lakeshore will join me in this debate and in the expression of congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, as well as to the Prime Minister for providing the opportunity for debate.

Peacekeeping is an activity Canada does as a country. It is an activity which gives us world-wide respect and makes us all proud to be Canadians.

Canadian soldiers have been involved in every United Nations peacekeeping operation since 1947. We have sent approximately 90,000 men and women to war-torn countries around the world. Peacekeeping and peacekeepers have represented us in areas like Korea in the 1950s; Egypt, 1954; the Congo, 1960–64; Nigeria, 1968–70; Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia in the early 1970s; Iran in the late 1980s; and in many Latin American countries between 1989 and 1992.

Canadian peacekeepers are currently in El Salvador, Cyprus, the western Sahara, Angola, Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Korea and Cambodia. Of course they are currently involved in the former Yugoslavia. There are some 4,700 Canadian men and women with United Nations peacekeeping operations around the world. They comprise approximately 10 per cent of all peacekeepers on duty.

We greatly value our peacekeepers and take pride in our peacekeeping activities. We treat that very seriously. Obviously we have very practical reasons for being involved. Canada can prosper only if we are living in a stable and reliable world

environment. I think most Canadians believe that peacekeeping is a valued activity. We had two Nobel peace prizes awarded, one to the late Lester B. Pearson and the other to the peacekeepers in 1988.

Given the international importance of Canada's peacekeeping efforts I would like to briefly discuss my two main concerns: first, the priorities in terms of financing; and second, peacekeeping in this international context.

One of the concerns many have with peacekeeping is that Canadian peacekeepers be properly outfitted for the dangerous situations they often encounter.

● (2340)

This means that the equipment should be fully functional. They should have access to proper facilities and have adequate protection. All of this, of course, requires financial support.

The second concern I have is international commitment. If we as Canadians decide it is a priority for us to remain involved in peacekeeping, we must encourage collective, responsible action through the United Nations. I hope we would encourage other United Nations members to pay up their UN dues, to commit troops, to provide logistical and technical support and to honour UN resolutions.

Canadians cannot do it alone as we have seen in Bosnia where replacement troops for Canadians are not allowed to relieve our peacekeepers. We need a strong United Nations to which countries pledge, not only in word but in financial support, troops and technical terms.

Peacekeeping is one area in which we service the world. I sincerely hope we continue to do so. However, I only want us to continue to do so if we provide our peacekeepers with the necessary equipment to protect themselves while performing their duties as well as securing that stronger international commitment.

We live in a global village. We have our responsibilities in that global village.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, please allow me, on behalf of Winnipeg North, to echo the sentiments of those who have risen in this House and congratulated you on your appointment as Deputy Speaker, and also to the Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien, and our fellow members.

I would also like to seize this opportunity to thank the constituents of Winnipeg North for their renewal of confidence in last fall's election. It is a testament to this new Liberal government's commitment to seek the input of its citizens on matters of foreign policy that we begin in the early life of this Parliament with a very public debate on peacekeeping.