

*Oral Questions*

In other words these elements which can be used to build a war machine are still getting in despite the tightest sanctions we have. How long would the Leader of the New Democratic Party—

**Mr. Speaker:** Perhaps we should move to the next question.

**Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon):** Mr. Speaker, obviously the minister responsible for external affairs is telling us in this House that we can put people on the moon but we cannot stop material going into Iraq by air, we cannot stop material going into Iraq by sea, and we cannot stop material going into Iraq by land.

Why then would we embark on economic sanctions in the first place because we would have known that? Also, where does he get this information, and will he table the source of his information today?

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I sympathize with the Leader of the New Democratic Party because she lives in a world of wish. She wishes that it were possible for humankind to be able to develop absolutely airtight control of human behaviour.

What I am telling here is that we have the most airtight system of sanctions the world has known and yet even with the most effective network of sanctions we have known, there are strategic imports getting into Iraq. They will continue to get into Iraq because if there is a change in the effectiveness of sanctions, if we weaken the United Nations, that will be a change not to make sanctions more effective with more countries participating, but to make sanctions less effective.

So how long does she want to—

**Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. The government has decided to send a field hospital to Saudi Arabia.

Can the minister tell us whether this will serve only the British forces or will it serve Canadian forces as well? Does he have any plans in mind for sending other Canadian forces to the gulf, such as land forces, for

example, and will this indicate any change in the position of the Canadian forces from defensive to offensive?

**Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think my hon. colleague was calling a field hospital an offensive force.

Canada received a request from the United Kingdom to provide a field surgical unit. They believe two things. Because of their additional commitment to the multinational force is presently serving under the UN Resolution 678 that they did not have the capacity to, one, provide their medical support, and two, the capacity as the Geneva Convention calls for to provide medical support to prisoners of war.

Canada has the capability of providing a self-sustained field hospital unit. It will consist of some 550 Canadian personnel. It will have the medical support side which will be made up of some 170. The other support staff will make up the balance, including an infantry company which will provide perimeter defence to the unit. It will be under technical control of the United Kingdom and it will fly the Canadian flag.

**Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador):** Mr. Speaker, it should be clear that this party has no opposition in principle to the sending of medical services and personnel. But what Canadians do want to know is the role of the Canadian forces now in the gulf, and those Canadian forces that may be committed to the gulf. Can the minister say what he has in mind exactly? Can he say today, clearly, what he has in mind for the role of the Canadian forces in the Persian Gulf?

**Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence):** Mr. Speaker, on several occasions over the last number of days the hon. member has talked about ground troops. I have said that the Government of Canada has no plans, secretive or otherwise, to send a brigade group into the gulf area.

I would like to know whether the hon. member agrees with his leader now that he says in principle the Liberal Party supports the sending of a field hospital unit. Does that include the statement his leader made yesterday, that if hostilities start all Canadian troops should be withdrawn?

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.