

*Government Orders*

It certainly would be better if that were largely Arab. Clearly there would also be a need for the kind of expertise that Canada is uniquely qualified to provide. That was raised with us by Egyptian leaders. It was discussed by my colleague, the associate minister, when she was in the region. It was part of the offer made to the United Nations by the Prime Minister in the letter that I delivered the other night.

On the question of an Arab solution, which everyone was seeking during a period of this debate because we thought that other solutions may not work, Canada adopted an aggressive approach to try to encourage Arab leaders to work and to work together. That included, in our view, trying to overcome as a practical matter the difference that existed between King Hussein of Jordan and other Arab leaders because Hussein and Jordan are of fundamental importance in the region in any event, and also because it would be better if we had those nations working together rather than at cross-purposes.

That involved a number of conversations, contacts between the Prime Minister and the King, the Prime Minister and President Mubarak and a number of others. It also involved a visit I was able to make to the region and a long conversation with King Hussein during which we discussed explicitly and at length the question of the hostages and whether it made any sense at all for Saddam Hussein to continue to keep the hostages. I made the case and King Hussein made the case that it did make no sense and two or three days after I left King Hussein told me that he intended to go again to Baghdad. That was the trip when he went again to Baghdad that resulted in proposals from him, from Yasser Arafat and from others that resulted in Saddam Hussein's decision to let all the hostages go.

In terms of consultations, we are in regular daily contact with foreign ministers, heads of government, and a range of other countries, 50 or 60, not just the coalition partners, but others who might have some influence.

The Prime Minister in particular is in regular contact with President Mubarak, King Hussein, President Bush, Prime Minister Major, President Mitterrand and President Gorbachev. In his conversations two days ago with President Mitterrand, there was discussion of the proposals that we had put forward to the Secretary-General, proposals that were not then public, and President Mitterrand indicated at that time that there was a great

deal of similarity in the thinking and the analysis of the French and the Canadian governments.

Those activities of course continue, as was indicated during Question Period, as we try to find if there are ways in the hours, now hours, that remain in this period that was established, this pause for peace that was established, to try to encourage Saddam Hussein to respond to someone.

I had hoped to have them with me and do not at the moment, but I propose later in the day with the agreement of the House to lay upon the table the French and English versions of the letter that the Prime Minister sent to Perez de Cuellar and which I delivered last week.

Those things have been done. They have done by Canada and they have been done by other countries. There has been an extraordinary attempt to solve this diplomatically. But today, January 15, at 3.30 in the afternoon, in Ottawa, we are at an impasse and we are approaching a turning point.

Peace still has a chance, but where once peace might have been an expectation, it is now only a hope, and that hope grows dim with every door that Saddam Hussein slams shut. Canada and the world must face the fact that Iraq may force a conflict.

There are, as we all know, no good wars. War is mankind's least noble invention. Everyone wants to avoid war. At this sombre moment we owe it to Canadians to determine as best we can if the course we are embarked upon is correct and if there are realistic, responsible alternatives. Not waiting, not running away, but real alternatives.

There have been wars in the past where patriotism has overshadowed logic, where pride has prevented peace, where emotion has overcome reason. We must be as confident as we can be, if this comes to war, that it is not one of those wars.

Forty-six years ago, the nations of this world formed an organization, the United Nations, whose primary purpose was to be the maintenance of international peace and security. The men and the women who designed that organization were not idealists. They were realists, realists worn by war, steeped in suffering. They had seen the futility of having rules without having a capacity to enforce those rules. That is futile. The experience of the League of the Nations proved it was futile.