

Government Orders

My final position or conclusion was that whatever position our Canadian government takes it will undoubtedly have profound implications because this very issue is begging us to answer many important questions. First, what will be the future shape and determination of Canada's armed forces in their mandate? Second, what is going to be the practice of future peacekeeping? Third, we will have to look at the evolution of the United Nations and its future mandate.

I reassure the hon. member that I have most certainly taken into consideration the various options. It is a very difficult question. Obviously we have heard controversial responses from various members. I want to reassure that I am not taking my position lightly, but the issue is: What is the nature of peacekeeping when there is no peace to keep?

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the speech of the hon. member for Central Nova and previously to one of the member for Cambridge. I think they made some rather good points.

Personally the three options presented seemed to be the three options that are available. I am sure Canada alone cannot decide on the second option. We can only decide on either the first or the third. Either we stay and be humanitarians or we get out and let the Serbs, the Croats and the Muslims decide what kind of a country they want to live in if they can do that.

There is certainly no peace. To pretend that we are peacemaking is silly. To pretend that there is peacekeeping being done in Bosnia is likewise silly.

I would like to ask a question of these people who know the area better than I do. I have done a little Balkan folk dancing but I have never been there. Are the historical enmities so deep that nothing short of separation or destruction is going to solve the problem?

Ms. Skoke: Mr. Speaker, I think I will defer to the hon. member for Cambridge sitting next to me because of his origin.

The Deputy Speaker: You cannot do that.

Ms. Skoke: Oh, I cannot do that. He was born in Croatia. I think I am going to be dodging and not answering the question specifically. What we have here is a classic case of conflict among ethnic groups. To think that peacekeeping or intervention is going to terminate that conflict is unreasonable.

We can look at our own country and its ethnic groups, and perhaps even at the House of Commons if I can use an example of where there may be some threat of the Bloc Quebecois wanting to separate from Canada. At what point in time can we solve all the world's problems with respect to these different factions and special interest groups? Because of that and because an ethnic war is going on there, it is my position that we

should offer refuge to any of those who wish to leave the country, anyone who wants to seek the freedom we offer in our great country of Canada.

I do not feel we have a responsibility or can effectively carry out a role to solve or resolve all the ethnic problems. We are going to do very well to handle the situation we have in Canada.

• (1855)

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate you on your elevation to the position of Deputy Speaker. It is the first time you have recognized me since I have been in the House and you have been in the chair. We on this side of the House are very pleased the Prime Minister saw fit to make the appointment. We are very hopeful and wish you good fortune in your future role. I am also thankful for your allowing me the opportunity to make some comments with respect to the former country of Yugoslavia.

Our involvement in Yugoslavia is on two fronts: a diplomatic front and a military front. The ongoing diplomatic initiatives undertaken by our minister and his parliamentary secretary who is with us this evening are commendable. I congratulate both of them on the very fine job they continue to do with respect to trying to solve this almost insurmountable and horrendous problem on the diplomatic level. The parliamentary secretary has visited with many of the people who originated from that country in my riding of Thunder Bay. I know their efforts both at the United Nations and at NATO were very well appreciated, not only by the people whom I represent but I am sure by all Canadians throughout the country.

The second area in which we are involved in this dispute is the military area and the participation of our military personnel who have been sent there to try to bring some order to the chaos. It is obvious they are there on humanitarian grounds by exclusion. They are not there as peacemakers because there is just no peace to make and that is really the role of our diplomats. They are not there as peacekeepers because there is no peace to keep. Obviously they are there on the very valid grounds of humanitarian reasons.

The main issues when one discusses the humanitarian aspects are those of providing the basic necessities of life such as food, medicine and some degree of shelter to the people who are always the innocent victims, those who are directly involved and those who are hurt in a conflict in which they have no part.

You had an office down the hall from me, Mr. Speaker, and I would see your children going back and forth. I am particularly grieved when I look at the atrocities perpetrated on children in this area and the sadness. From my perspective, whenever I see a program in the newscast referring to this troubled area and I see the children, my mind goes to my grandchildren as I am sure it does for other Canadians. The situation is horrible. One wonders