

Private Members' Business

situation based on a decision by the United Nations without reference to Parliament. Certainly I would not agree with that.

Canadians are the best or at least among the very best in the world of peacekeeping. Our peacekeepers are well trained, well disciplined. They are innovative. They are trustworthy. They are dependable. They are compassionate and proficient in establishing and maintaining good relations with all factions in the area of conflict. This is painfully evident when one visits Bosnia or Croatia. Our peacekeepers are trusted because they are known to be unbiased. They show no favouritism to one side or the other. This means that all sides trust their judgment and rely on them to be fair and impartial.

Someone said that more interpersonal relations training is required for our peacekeepers. There are very few, if any, of us who would not benefit from more training in this aspect but personal observation in the field has shown me that our peacekeepers not only do well but excel in their relationships with all factions in their area of responsibility. Possibly, because of Canadian qualifications, we should consider a different aspect of peacekeeping for Canada. Perhaps it should be our mandate or our best purpose to deploy quickly. We have the ability to resolve a situation over a short period of time and then withdraw, turning that job over to other peacekeepers: a first in, stabilize, establish a good situation and withdraw scenario.

• (1810)

Withdrawing seems to be Canada's primary peacekeeping problem. We can involve ourselves but we cannot get out. Canada had troops in Cyprus for more than 29 years. As a matter of fact we still have two people there. We have been in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina for more than three years.

Bill C-295 would not hamstring government's ability to react quickly to pop-up crises because it applies only to the commitment of 100 or more personnel and to time periods exceeding one month. Furthermore, considering the seriousness of deploying Canadian personnel on peacekeeping operations, a parliamentary debate would seem to be the minimum acceptable approval required.

Should Parliament be in recess at the time of a crisis surely such a commitment deserves and would justify the recall of Parliament for such a debate.

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-295 on behalf of the people of Guelph—Wellington today.

I thank the hon. member for Fraser Valley East for his concern for Canadian peacekeepers. I know he is very sincere in this bill. I believe the bill has been introduced because of his concern and for the well-being of Canadian forces, a concern that is shared by the residents of Guelph—Wellington.

Canadians invented the concept of peace making. Former Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in the 1950s. Our peacekeepers shared that same prize in the 1980s. We have always acted in the interest of maintaining international peace and security.

Many of my constituents have participated in peacekeeping operations across the world and have distinguished themselves in service to their country. For example, recently Petty Officer Second Class Martin Mollison received a mention in dispatch from the Governor General for his act of bravery while serving in Cambodia.

I cannot support this legislation for several reasons I wish to make clear to the House. As the hon. member knows, peacekeeping is carried out pursuant to the authority of the Minister of National Defence under section 4 of the National Defence Act. The minister has the authority with respect to the management and direction of the Canadian forces and of all matters relating to national defence.

The legislation changes the decision making with respect to peacekeeping deployment and therefore restricts the prerogative, speed and discretion of the crown to determine Canada's contribution to United Nations or regional peace operations.

The legislation would also remove the responsibility and discretion of the minister respecting military operations. This would therefore affect the speed with which we can respond to requests for assistance from the United Nations.

The legislation would also ensure it would take longer for Canada to provide assistance because it would add another layer in decision making processes which is a strange suggestion from a member whose party stands for reduced government and easier decision making.

The Reform Party's blue sheet states it supports a national defence policy that would provide a fast response to national or international conflict. By providing for a process that would subject the involvement of Canadian forces in international peacekeeping missions to parliamentary control the hon. member appears to be contradicting the support of a quick response which is central to the promises he made during the last election.

Chapter VII of the United Nations charter provides for action by the security council with respect to the peace, breaches of peace and acts of aggression. Under articles 25 and 48 of the charter, member states of the United Nations are required to carry out the decisions of the security council for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The procedures proposed by Bill C-295 would restrict government from carrying out its obligations under the United Nations charter. All Canadians share the pride of knowing that we have contributed to world peace. While the armed forces remain small and the population is modest compared to other