

Government Orders

I would like every colleague, the Canadian people and every colleague to watch what is going on. It is not enough for me as a responsible Member of Parliament to know that we can go on debating without knowing exactly at a certain time. Surely, the leadership of this Parliament, the leadership includes you, Monsieur, each of the parties and the Independent members, has to know. Can we not agree, in a cool fashion, because at this hour it is not time for emotion?

It is time for cool minds to prevail and to know at what time if possible we could be informed if the Prime Minister, my Prime Minister—because at this hour he is my Prime Minister—can come back and make a statement. Then we would debate with each other. Then we would come back and take our responsibility. I think it makes sense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I think the messages got through on both sides. There seems to be agreement to continue the debate. After the intervention of the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, we are now at the questions and comments period.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a comment. Perhaps the time I take to make this comment will be sufficient to enable some members to obtain more information and convey it to the House.

[*English*]

I heard and listened with tremendous attention to the speech made moments ago by a colleague, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. I want to congratulate her on her speech.

I would like to say that I share very much some of the concerns she has expressed. Many of the things she has said I agree with.

Perhaps what I want to say more than anything else is that I hope she is wrong, and I am wrong, because of the events that have occurred over the last few minutes.

It could very well be—as a matter of fact I understand it has now been confirmed by the White House—that the military intervention, call it for what it is, that war has begun. The very grim picture of that war that has been described by members so eloquently earlier on is in many ways an eventual situation that I also foresee as possible.

I want to reiterate how wrong I hope we both are in this view, not because politicians usually like to be wrong but, more important, because the lives of so many people are at stake and because those hostilities, that war has begun.

This is not really a question, but I would like to make a comment to which our colleague may add a further comment. I still believe this action that has been initiated was not the proper one, but that should not in any way be mistaken or misinterpreted to suggest that if our troops are in a war situation I would not support them.

This does not mean that I like them being there because I do not.

Hopefully within the next few minutes someone from the government side will be able to brief this House on the current situation.

I think you will appreciate that almost anything we say at this point without that briefing is academic. The question is no longer. Are we or are we not in favour of military action, if the action has already been authorized moments ago by this government? I hope that is not the case but, if it is, the debate will have to change.

I am very saddened about what has happened in the last few minutes and perhaps all Canadians over the next few minutes and hours should pray that at the very least the hostilities will be short-lived, if they are in fact occurring as we believe they are, and that as few human lives as possible will be lost in that process.

• (1940)

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I, too, am saddened that presumably war has started in the Persian Gulf. We knew when we started this special session of the House of Commons that every Canadian in the country is familiar with the burden that the Canadian nation is faced with.

My leader, when he spoke on debate on this motion to persuade the government not to declare war, said that the “threat of death hangs over the Middle East and its people”. Now that war has started, as reported, that fear is becoming even more real.

I am not a military expert but I have some idea what war can do to a human body. The human body is not made of steel or shatterproof glass or armour. It is living and fragile. I ask: How will the bodies of our young soldiers survive an attack of poison gas? Sources say our troops do not have enough protection and I hope that is wrong because, in the event of use of poison gas only a gas mask intervenes between the life of our Canadian