

Government Orders

And further, that Canada work at the Security Council to seek assurances that no country will undertake offensive military operations against Iraq unless they are under UN command and explicitly authorized by the Security Council.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that I did not have to wait any longer than I already have to enter into the debate on this very serious issue.

In my riding of Dartmouth since the beginning of August, there has been one over-riding issue. I know many times that things such as the government's unconscionable GST, its regressive social programs, and its destructive economic programs take the forefront.

I come from a fairly special riding. My riding borders the shores of Halifax Harbour. It is a riding, the city of Dartmouth, that has a very strong military tradition. It is a riding which looks out on the Bedford Basin where the allied convoys used to assemble before they went over to fight that great war for liberty and freedom, the Second World War.

My riding of Dartmouth has grown accustomed to standing on the shores and to waving good-bye, then to her men, and today to her men and women who have chosen to give and dedicate their lives to the service of the country through the Canadian Armed Forces.

I am pleased to rise in this debate today, because perhaps nowhere else in the country is a single riding more affected by the actions of the government when it decided to send the three naval vessels—HMCS *Athabaskan*, HMCS *Terra Nova*, and HMCS *Protecteur*—into the Middle East, than the riding of Dartmouth.

On those three vessels, there are about 924 men and women. My colleague from Halifax and I sometimes disagree on the split, but of those 924 men and women, probably at least 50 per cent, and perhaps about 60 per cent, live in the riding of Dartmouth. Most of the rest of them live in the riding of Halifax.

I want to say from the outset that I support in principle, the Canadian government's actions in condemning the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, by joining later with the United Nations and nations from around the world to say: "This type of activity cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. Canada will do the right thing and will participate in the naval blockade of Iraq." I support that.

It is in the finest of traditions of the Canadian Armed Forces, when called upon, to go to protect sovereignty of states and to protect freedoms. But, there was a problem. The problem was when this unprecedented action was taken because of unprecedented circumstances in the Middle East.

When Iraq decided to take over the sovereign state of Kuwait, the government forgot one fundamental thing. That fundamental thing was that it should have recalled Parliament so that the Canadian members of Parliament, the people of Canada, the people who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces and their families were kept fully abreast of the reasons why this action was taken. Instead, this government chose differently. It was a summer of hiding for this government, in particular this Prime Minister. He was under fire on the economic front, on the constitutional front, on the trustworthiness front and what he wanted to do was hide. Even though this unprecedented action was taken to send our Canadian navy into a potential theatre of war, he did not do the right thing and that was recall this Parliament, do it immediately, to seek a national consensus so that when our men and women of the Canadian navy went overseas they knew that they had the nation of Canada behind them.

This is not a small error. I have spoken to many men and women who live in my constituency who have dedicated themselves to the service of the country through the Canadian Armed Forces. They said they were proud to do their bit. They were proud even though our equipment is not what we should have to show that we are the best trained military in the world. They were proud to do their part, but they were bitterly disappointed that the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada chose political expediency over the proper parliamentary and moral thing to do, and that was to recall this Parliament. The debate that we are having today, in the middle of October, should have taken place at the beginning of August, but the government chose not to do that. It was the summer of the nation's discontent. It was the summer that this government went into hiding.

Our party urged the government to recall Parliament and to do it immediately. We did not come out and take cheap, partisan, political shots. We understood the severity and the complexity of what was happening over in the Middle East. We understood the implications for all freedom-loving nations if this action was allowed to