

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise in the House to represent the citizens of Fredericton—York—Sunbury. It humbles me when I consider just how many people will be affected by the outcome of the government's decision around this debate.

• (2330)

As this is my first opportunity, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment. I also wish to pay tribute to the Hon. Milton Gregg, the last member of both my riding and my party to be in this House. He was a representative of the government of the day and won the Victoria Cross in the Second World War.

I would also like to pay tribute to my immediate predecessor, Mr. Bud Bird. Mr. Bird has long served our region with dignity and diligence.

Finally I would like to note the recent passing of my Reform Party opponent. Jack Lamey was a worthy representative of his party. On behalf of all the residents of the riding I express sympathy to his wife Addie and the family.

CFB Gagetown, the largest military training base in Canada and by land mass the largest base in the Commonwealth, lies within my riding. I am sure members of this House can appreciate the significance of this debate for the people of Fredericton—York—Sunbury in general and for the people of CFB Gagetown in particular.

It is one thing to be concerned for family and friends serving in dangerous circumstances halfway round the world. It is appreciably worse when that risk is not accompanied by a clear sense of purpose or measure of effectiveness.

Hopefully this debate will serve to clarify Canada's position on the role of our country and others within the UN peacekeeping forces generally and in Bosnia—Hercegovina in particular.

I should say that we in Fredericton—York—Sunbury are pleased with the government's decision to have this debate. I would also like to commend the other parties and their leaders for both their co-operation and their participation. Their early intervention did much to establish the tone for this debate and I am certain Canadians will find it refreshing to know that we want to get things accomplished.

As I acknowledged earlier, constituents within my riding are particularly interested in this debate because so many of CFB Gagetown have, are, or probably will participate in peacekeeping engagements.

In light of this level of concern I wanted to ensure that I did not deal with the situation superficially. Sunday night I met with a number of interested parties wanting to advise me of their concerns. Participants ranged from former peacekeepers, one of whom was stationed in Sarajevo, students from the region

attending the University of New Brunswick, and others of the public who had called or written to express concerns.

Of particular note, we received a detailed presentation on a situation in Bosnia from a member of the military recently stationed in that region. I would like to thank Lieutenant Colonel Yann Hidioglou, the deputy commander of the United Nations military observers, for his thoughtful and comprehensive briefing.

It was repeated throughout the meeting that the debate surrounding the situation in Bosnia has become too polarized. Arguments are generally aligned at one of two ends. Canada must be in Bosnia under any or all circumstances, or we must remove our troops because the situation is either too dangerous, too costly, or ineffective.

We must work together to find a more moderate middle ground solution. There are no easy answers but in identifying the balance we need to consider what the consequences could be if we decided to remove our troops entirely. We are after all citizens of the world.

We must recognize the possibility that a withdrawal might only be temporary. Troops might have to intervene again under conditions far worse than those that currently exist. As well, it is clear that our troops are able to get humanitarian aid through to those in need. The UN Commission for Refugees and the Red Cross are both on record as having stated that the food is getting through.

What about our international reputation? If the UN withdraws what impact will this have on future peacekeeping operations? Would this make it politically impossible for governments to keep forces in foreign regions? In the same vein how do we want to be remembered by history? We must consider what the scenario might be if we were not involved in Bosnia.

I believe a balance must be struck in order to achieve our desired middle ground. That balance begins with the recommitting of our troops. We must however recommit as a government that is willing to improve conditions for the men and the women on the ground.

I see a number of ways we can accomplish this goal. First, Canada as a country has great credibility as a nation of peace and peacekeeping. I believe we should rely on our knowledge and reputation in these areas and call upon other countries, many of which have closer ties than we with the belligerents to launch an appeal to warring factions and seek diplomatic solutions.

• (2335)

We must also review the criteria under which we have committed our troops and make amendments where possible to improve conditions, again calling upon our historical reputation and record. People are uncertain about our role in Bosnia, our purpose for participating and the value of the exercise. We need