

Here we are faced with the invasion of a small country by a big one. The world community unanimously is asking for action and we are saying: "Later." I tell the hon. gentleman that later will not change anything. We will still be faced with the same problem. If the sanctions were working, they would have an impact on Saddam Hussein. The working of the sanctions is where the proof lies, not in the fact that there are fewer fruits in the market, but the fact that the government of Iraq is taking notice. I have not seen anything to that effect.

When one sees the Secretary General of the United Nations being asked to wait for practically an hour to be treated with disdain, the representative of the world community, this is not an indication that one is dealing with somebody who wants to be reasonable. We know that if one is against crime, one should be against the crimes that have been committed over the last five months in that country. Do not forget them. This is why we cannot say to these people who are asking for help: "Just wait, we will make a few more speeches. Wait for a few more months." The crime has been committed. Five months have gone by and the time for action is getting closer. I hope we can avoid it, but I have my doubts.

• (1820)

**Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to participate in this debate on what, as my leader has indicated, is literally a question of life and death. This is very likely the most important debate that all of us who have the honour of serving as members of the House and elected representatives of the people of Canada will ever participate in.

[*Translation*]

I must emphasize the fact that no member of this House has debated the fundamental issue facing us now, whether or not Canada should take part in a war. The last time Canadian parliamentarians discussed this issue was in 1950, and it had to do with the Korean war.

[*English*]

That makes all the more grave our responsibility as members of the House to examine the evidence and to look with care at the arguments that are made with respect to the proposal of the government that would have the effect of plunging this nation into a catastrophic war.

### *Government Orders*

It also makes more important the reality that on a question this fundamental which goes to the very soul of this nation, and indeed to each of us as elected members, that we should be free to vote with our conscience and listen to the arguments that are made, and, as my leader pointed has pointed out, to vote in a free vote on this fundamental question.

The issue in this debate is not whether we condemn as a country, as a Parliament, and as Canadian people, the invasion on August 2 by Iraq of Kuwait. Of course, we condemn that. The community of nations has condemned that. With one voice we join in that condemnation.

I have met personally with men and women who have been in Kuwait and who have seen the devastating impact of that invasion. I met with those who are hostages held in Kuwait and with Kuwaitis themselves. There is a very significant Palestinian community in Kuwait. I have spoken with our very courageous staff from the Canadian embassy in Kuwait. There are people such as Bill Bowden and the men and women who displayed enormous courage, as did the Canadian hostages, in assisting those who were held there.

I and my colleagues have read the report of Amnesty International documenting the horrors of this invasion and annexation. That is not the issue.

The issue is how we as a community of nations, in this first challenge since the end of the cold war, respond to that aggression.

Others have talked about previous wars. They have talked about the period leading up to World War II and the destruction of life and the enormous devastation in World War II. There was the dropping of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Some have argued and, indeed, the Secretary of State for External Affairs has argued, that in some way the lesson we should draw from World War II is that we should plunge ourselves into another war. Surely the lesson is precisely the opposite. In the time leading up to World War II, the community of nations did not in fact use alternatives to war. Quite the contrary, as my colleague from Trinity—Spadina who is a veteran of that war has pointed out. The community of nations engaged actively in commerce with Germany. Indeed, many of the countries that ultimately went to war were those whose companies were supplying the Germans with weapons.