

*Private Members' Business*

Bill C-295 should not be necessary at this time. We should have established long since an ability for Parliament to become involved in the deployment of Canadian forces personnel to life threatening situations.

I would like to go on record as commending the government. It is far superior to its predecessors in that it has had four debates to date dealing with peacekeeping. The first one was on January 25, 1994 and at that time there was all party support for Canada's continuing peacekeeping commitments. Following that, on February 17, 1994 there was a debate by the special joint committee on Canada's defence policy which also touched on peacekeeping and again received all party support.

The third debate on peacekeeping was in September 1994. Notice was given on September 19, with the debate on September 21, hardly sufficient time to adequately prepare and debate an issue, particularly when the mandate was to be renewed on September 30. In other words, it was just over a week from the time the debate commenced until the commitment was signed.

In December 1994 Reform laid down four stipulations which should be met if Canadian troops were to be left in the former Yugoslavia. These were that the airport at Sarajevo should be kept open; convoys should be able to proceed unimpeded; peacekeepers should not be interfered with and that a ceasefire should be in place and respected. As we all know, subsequent to that time these four parameters were all violated.

Using an opposition supply day, Reform forced a discussion on severe problems in the defence department. The Minister of National Defence, having belatedly realized his failure to schedule a debate on renewal of the Balkan commitment, tried to convey that the opposition initiated debate would constitute a debate on renewing our peacekeeping commitment. When that was not satisfactory to us, the minister called for a debate on March 29, 1995 with the commitment expiring on March 31, 1995.

While I commend the government for having held debates, I question the validity of their timing. If we are really serious about Parliament and Canadians having input in whether Canadian troops should be committed to life threatening situations, surely it deserves more attention than it has been given by the government.

I would like to quote from the red book where it says: "A Liberal government will also expand the rights of Parliament to debate major Canadian foreign policy initiatives, such as the deployment of peacekeeping forces and the rights of Canadian to regular and serious consultation on foreign policy issues". From that statement it is quite obvious the government is not keeping its promise so we have another broken red book promise.

• (1805)

If one wants to look at a newly emerging democratic country, my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan recently returned from a North Atlantic Council meeting in Hungary at Budapest. He found that although it is relatively newly into the business, civilian control of the military in Hungary is vitally important. More important, the Hungarian Parliament has far more control than does the Canadian Parliament. No Hungarian soldier may be sent on operations beyond Hungary's borders without the approval of Parliament. This ensures that the pros and cons of any deployment are debated and that the people are aware of the factors bearing on the involvement of their country in foreign ventures.

I ask the question: Had there been a full parliamentary debate prior to committing forces to the former Yugoslavia, would we now be in Bosnia and Hercegovina? I suggest that probably there would be at least 250 members of the House who would disagree with that initial commitment having been taken, going on the mandate that was not there and the fact that the achievement of peace was not a real desire on the part of the people involved.

There was no peace to keep and no desire for peace on the part of the combatants. That would have been brought out in debate. It would have become obvious there could be no appropriate mandate for the Canadian peacekeepers to become involved.

We need real debate, not a facade or smoke and mirrors. This is even more vitally important when one considers that peacekeeping is becoming more dangerous with every day. Canada, as the House will well remember, was once involved in all peacekeeping operations. With the reduction in the size of our forces, the financial constraints and the realization that Canada can no longer contribute to all, we must selectively involve ourselves in those missions that we know we can accomplish well.

UN peacekeeping has grown astronomically. In January of 1993 the UN had 12,000 peacekeepers in the field. Eighteen months later, in July of 1994, there were 80,000 peacekeepers in the field. In early 1993, Canada had 4,700 peacekeepers deployed. The number now has shrunk to between 3,000 and 3,500, but that number seems likely to continue. Canada is now providing 3.6 per cent of the UN peacekeepers.

With regard to command and control, I would like to return to the comments made by both the Bloc and the parliamentary secretary with regard to a UN standing force. They object to the unfortunate mistake of my colleague when he put command rather than operational control, but they seem willing to consider the assignment of operational command or control to the UN. I do not think Canadians are willing to see Canadian soldiers committed to a shooting situation or to a life threatening