

Government Orders

my friend from the Bloc endorsing that tonight and it is very refreshing. I also say that because as a former member of the Ontario legislature for 10 years I do not think I ever had the privilege of participating in a debate that was this constructive and lacked the interjections which I have become used to over the years.

• (2135)

Being a soldier, a service person, always has been dangerous. Being in combat is highly dangerous. I wonder whether playing this humanitarian role, which is neither peacemaking nor peace-keeping is even more dangerous. It is more dangerous because of the continuing barrage, the continuing intimidation, the continuing challenge to the psyche of our service people over there on a daily basis. It never stops. It goes on and on.

Yet with the training that these people receive and the level of professionalism they take such pride in and we are so proud of, they carry on through it all. Very often it is through the worst of conditions, conditions that you and I, Mr. Speaker, could not possibly imagine.

Reference was made to the boy scouts and the way Canada very often participates in that altruistic mode. Having been a boy scout for 30 years I must say that I am kind of proud that we do that in Canada, in spite of the fact that sometimes we tend to walk where angels fear to tread.

I join this debate in expressing great pride in those service people and recognizing the unique role Canada plays in the world. We are indeed the best at what we do. We should always recognize that very special responsibility.

Canada has continually been an ardent supporter of the United Nations. Indeed Canada pays its dues. We are there when we are called upon. We wish that every member country would accept that same responsibility. Perhaps as time goes on we are going to have to face that question with the United Nations as to whether it becomes what the late Mr. Pearson believed it could become at its very best or leave us hanging with some other member countries rather high and dry because others will not shoulder their share of the responsibility.

Part of our reason for needing to stay as an agent of humanitarian aid in Bosnia is part of our recognition of the importance of the United Nations and our desire to keep it not just alive, but well, thriving and growing.

This debate was precipitated by the news report of the apprehension and detaining of 11 of our service people by what it turns out to be a group of people who might have been less than *compos mentis* at the time, to be generous. That was the bad news that was reported to this country which really was the trigger that got this debate going.

We should point out in fairness and in perspective that all of the functions that go on in Bosnia are not those kinds of critical situations. It is not news to report that there are hundreds of tonnes of food being shipped every day into these various hot spots. It is not news when nothing happens. It would be like reporting that there were 5,000 safe take-offs and landings in Canada last week. That is never reported but when there is one aircraft accident or a nose wheel collapses, it makes the front page. I would suggest to all of us that we have to put what we read in the newspapers and what we see on television into that proper perspective.

• (2140)

I would like to make a personal comment on air strikes. It seems to me that air strikes under these conditions would be a gross admission of failure, of our inability to handle the situation in any other way, the very last resort.

As has been pointed out there are about three million souls in Bosnia who depend on the countries under the United Nations that are delivering humanitarian aid daily. They have no other means of continuing their physical existence, so we have that responsibility.

Finally I would like to make a suggestion to the Minister of National Defence who is here with us tonight listening to this debate. I am not sure whether our soldiers would really appreciate it that much but perhaps we could send them some copies of the *Hansard* which contains this debate to let them know what we think of them and how proud we are of the work they are doing.

Mr. Mifflin: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Looking at the time, we had agreed to go until 10 o'clock. My assessment is that we are progressing very well. Certainly the level of debate is excellent even at this time of the evening. Quite a few other speakers would like to go on the record on this important subject.

I wonder if I could beg the indulgence of the House to sit until midnight on the condition that there be 10-minute speeches and no questions and comments? Could I seek unanimous agreement from the House on that please?

The Deputy Speaker: Could we agree that the pages could go home?

Mr. Mifflin: Mr. Speaker, there is no objection from the government side and I strongly recommend it.

The Deputy Speaker: Can we start right now or do we need to have further questions?

Mr. Mifflin: Mr. Speaker, I would recommend because of the number of speakers that if the House agrees, we should start now with 10-minute speeches.

Some hon. members: Agreed.