

Government Orders

Again, what role is Canada to play in the advancement of a positive and constructive general conference on the Middle East, if we participating in military action?

No, the option for Canada is quite clear. It is not to engage in military action. It is not to convince itself that otherwise the United Nations is going to collapse and that collective security is going to be eroded if we do not engage in military action today. On the contrary, the best route for Canada to take is to engage in economic sanctions, to support our allies and friends in such action, and ensure through their full implementation the resolution of not only the problem between Iraq and Kuwait but of the whole Middle East situation.

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Etobicoke North and seek his comment on the following statement made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs. He said: "We should not rule out the possibility that young Canadian soldiers, women and men, will not return to this country for celebrations, but will stay in the gulf for burial". This statement was made in October 1990. It requires only a little observation on the part of those who have expressed their thoughts on this important issue as the hon. member for Etobicoke North has done.

• (2300)

Mr. MacLaren: Madam Speaker, the bankruptcy of the government's approach to the wholly deplorable situation that has arisen in the Middle East is certainly exemplified by the statement which the hon. member for Davenport has just cited.

To conclude in October that there is no alternative for Canada in seeking to support the rule of law in the expulsion of an aggressor from another nation, that there was no alternative but the death of young Canadians, strikes me as the worst form of bankruptcy of international diplomacy. We are far from that situation. We can enforce sanctions. Along with the other nations engaged in the so-called coalition in the Gulf we can double our efforts to insure that they are more effective.

I do not doubt in the absence of any evidence that the government can offer that those sanctions can be more effective, not tomorrow, not the next day, but certainly in the time ahead. It is that route which promises the most effective means of countering the aggression that has taken place and contributing to the eventual resolution

of the major issues that continue to dog our efforts to bring about lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Madam Speaker, let me compliment my good friend and colleague from Etobicoke for his contributions here this evening. His wisdom and years of experience in the diplomatic corp have shown through in the thoughtful presentation he made for us to consider.

We listened to the debate in the United States Senate over the past weekend in some detail, and we heard at some point today what we consider to be the vital national interest. At that time, it was the vital national interest of what the senators in the United States consider to be the national interest of their country.

I think we hedged around it today when the government tried to explain what the vital national interest of Canada is to embark on this catastrophic event of bringing this country to the brink of war, and perhaps within 55 minutes to the actual war. I ask my friend what vital interests are we protecting? In his opinion, what vital Canadian interests are we protecting by this move to which the government is bringing us in such a short period of time?

Mr. MacLaren: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon for his comment and question. I do not think any of us would dispute that Canada has long had and will continue to have a fundamental national interest in seeing that collective security is the best route to ensure Canadian security. I do not think any of us dispute that.

The question that the government has in effect posed to Canadians is, whether or not military action the only route to ensure that collective security. The answer is, patently, no. There is a spectrum of opportunity that faces the United Nations members and Canadians today to reinforce our collective security by measures other than military.

Resolution 678 of the Security Council does not say that the United Nations decided as of January 15 that military action will take place. It leaves to the member states, that is those member states that are co-operating with the Government of Kuwait, to decide what measures they want to take to implement the resolution calling upon Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.