

Government Orders

divergence of opinion admittedly, but I think essential the matter before us suggests that perhaps blame should be associated to those that got us where we are today. I do not think that is productive and I certainly will not pursue that avenue at all because I think it is a waste of time.

• (1920)

I think that the solutions that have been placed before us by some people are based on an environment outside of an issue that we are familiar with and perhaps should be taken somewhat lightly. I think we have the integrity of the United Nations which has been placed before us and which has under its control the finest military force in the world. As a result of that our confidence should be placed in those who are making those kinds of decisions.

You are encouraging me to put a question before the speaker, and Mr. Speaker I intend to do that right now. I would like to ask: Have the solutions that have been proposed before this House of Commons in these past couple of days been based on poor, little or no information of the actual reality that exists?

Mr. Harvard: Mr. Speaker, I am not exactly sure whether I am clear on the question. If he is asking the question of whether the government has based its decision on certain information and certain documents, of course I am in no doubt whatsoever that it has had talks with people all around the world, is privy to certain information and has decided for better or for worse to join hostilities to commit the country to war. I said earlier that I respect the decision. It is a judgment call.

If I had been, say, the Prime Minister, I would have said: "No, that decision should not be made now. Maybe sometime down the road, I do not know when but maybe we would have no choice". But at this particular juncture, in my considered opinion and certainly in the considered opinion of the Official Opposition, despite anything we have heard, the war option was the first choice at this time.

Mr. Gilbert Parent (Welland—St. Catharines—Thorold): Mr. Speaker, by way of commentary I find myself in agreement with many of the points made by the member for Winnipeg St. James, specifically his opposition and our opposition to this war at this time. We believe that sanctions should have been given time to work. But there is no question, as the hon. member

pointed out, that we are in full support of our young men and women in the gulf who are not only carrying the Canadian flag but carrying our hopes that they will be coming back safe and sound.

The point that we are debating here, support of the UN resolution, is a moot point because now our nation finds itself at war. Of course, we all support the United Nations. I doubt very much if there is anyone in this House who would oppose the objectives of the United Nations. I for one over the years have championed the cause of this august body.

I find that there are some problems arising. I would ask the hon. member for Winnipeg St. James perhaps to address two questions that I might put to him. I believe myself that the effect on the peacekeeping ability of Canada will be impaired because we are belligerents in the Middle East and that it will have an effect on our ability to be the peacekeepers a little later on. I wonder if he could address himself to that point.

Second, I wonder if the hon. member would be in agreement with me that there should be a Middle East conference to discuss all of the problems in the Middle East, including the Palestinian-Israeli problem at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. Harvard: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Welland—St. Catharines—Thorold for his questions. Let me deal with the first; whether our peacekeeping ability has been impaired because of this decision. Of course, it has been, because we have become belligerent. When the time comes for negotiation, and for bringing about a truce and maintaining the peace, we cannot be there. Who is going to accept us? I would doubt very much whether the Iraqis would accept us. I think I would be very, very surprised. So, some other country around the world will have to be found. Yes, I agree with the hon. member, I think our peacekeeping ability has been impaired.

On the second question, which is a bit more sensitive because of the word linkage, I would answer it this way: I do not think there is a doubt in the world that if genuine peace is ever to come to the Middle East, before that genuine peace comes, there will have to be talks. Enemies will have to talk to each other. There will have to be negotiations and, yes, some time down the road there will have to be a conference. I do not know how