

Government Orders

not only be perfectly able to fulfil their redefined mission for the 21st century, they will also do so knowing full well what is expected of them.

Withdrawing from peacekeeping, withdrawing from Bosnia, would be repudiating one of our greatest traditions. It would also, given our reputation as a world leader in peacekeeping, set up a chain reaction among countries participating in peacekeeping operations with the United Nations. It would also mean condemning tens of thousands of men, women and children to suffering, torture, rape and death. This might also cause the conflict to escalate and spread to neighbouring areas.

Canada has undertaken in Bosnia a difficult, but useful, humanitarian action. People in Quebec and Canada are not the type to quit a job they took on. On the contrary, we all strive to finish what we start, especially when the going gets tough. Quebecers and Canadians are not quitters.

I would like to conclude by thanking personally, and on behalf of all my colleagues in this house I am sure, all our troops from Quebec and Canada who, day after day, put their life on the line while serving their fellow man, not only because this is the job we asked them to do, but also because they are noble-hearted men and women.

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Portneuf on his speech. It was all the more appreciated because the Valcartier base is in his riding. The personal testimony of soldiers and their families contributed very much to this debate.

I would like to ask the hon. member a question on his notion of what he called a new peacekeeping role for Canada. He talked about the need to protect people in distress. If I got it right, it all boils down to intervention on humanitarian grounds.

Is that the new role he contemplates? Does he advocate intervention on humanitarian grounds only or does he want to take that further and include some diplomatic or negotiating role?

• (2035)

Mr. de Savoye: Mr. Speaker, I am not in a position to define this new role for the House. However, I see humanitarian missions covering a number of aspects. One is protecting populations in distress. Gaining time is another consideration, by giving the factions a number of rules to observe, which will give diplomacy enough room, both literally and figuratively, to proceed with negotiations that one hopes will bear fruit, and they will, if the timing is right. So our objective should not be only to feed, care and protect. It should also include, and we see that today with our own peacekeepers, talking to the factions and creating a number of mini-agreements which over time will

give our diplomats a chance to build on what has been achieved. I hope that answers the hon. member's question.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, I much appreciated the excellent speech made by the hon. member for Portneuf. I had the privilege of being born in his riding, and in fact, I was born in Valcartier, so his riding is twice-blessed.

The hon. member for Rivière-du-Loup mentioned a multilateral force formed by the UN that would ensure our troops would be better prepared for such operations.

He also mentioned courses in history or even humanitarian aid for our soldiers, to prepare them for missions as complex as those in Bosnia, for instance. What are his thoughts on this suggestion which is also supported by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra? Is this more or less in line with what he was trying to say?

Mr. de Savoye: I want to thank the hon. member who was born in Portneuf for his question.

In fact, Canada is in an excellent position to play a leading role at the United Nations in organizing a multilateral force. We have the expertise, and we also have the recognition of the international community. It would be not merely sensible but also interesting and productive to go this route. I think the twenty-first century will give us a chance to make the words violence and war obsolete.

Mr. André Caron (Jonquière): I want to thank the hon. member for Portneuf for his remarks. I would like to say a few words about how our people would feel if Canada were to play a greater role in peacekeeping missions and in the training of soldiers for such missions.

For the past few years, a rather lively debate has been taking place in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region on the possibility of locating a firing range in the area for the training of F-18 pilots. As you know, the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region is home to CFB Bagotville, one of the three or four major strategic bases in Canada. By the way, this military base operates completely in French. One of the principal arguments advanced by those who oppose the plans for the firing range is that we can no longer afford to have the armed forces play a traditional role in Canada today. These people want to transform CFB Bagotville into a training base for UN peacekeeping missions. While their intentions may be good, there are many problems underlying this proposal. The fact remains, however, that the people in my region would be prepared to see Canadian and Quebec soldiers go out on peacekeeping missions and maybe even do a little more than that.

• (2040)

People do not like to see television images of civilians suffering, of bombings, deaths and other atrocities. When we