

Government Orders

What if we keep on referring to certain resolutions the United Nations has made in the past? It recognizes FYROM or the former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia. We should keep on referring to it as such as the name was approved by the United Nations and agreed upon by both parties. All we are doing here is adding fuel to the fire.

I read a sports column the other day about breaking down the groups in the various European soccer competitions that are to take place next year. The newspaper stated that Greece will be in this section and Macedonia will be in another section. I think we have to help ourselves by presenting the facts as they are unless they are consistently presented as FYROM or the former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia.

• (1330)

Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I feel honoured to rise and speak on this subject today for a number of reasons.

First, I think the fact that the Prime Minister has seen fit to encourage a debate of this nature so early in the 35th Parliament is I believe a tribute to our peacekeepers and the kind of operations that Canada has become expert in over a number of years.

Second, I would like to point out what a—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I regret the intervention to the parliamentary secretary. I would ask for his indulgence and possibly that of the House. It has been my error or omission following the request from the Reform Party which had indicated earlier in this debate that it was splitting its questions into 10 and 5.

I hope that with your consent I might recognize the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan. I would ask the parliamentary secretary to please help me.

Mr. Mifflin: Mr. Speaker, seeing as how I forgot to congratulate you on your appointment, I think I should pay you back by allowing the Reform Party to speak on this subject.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I thank the parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, I did not jump up when you called the hon. member for Bonavista—Trinity—Conception out of turn because I have such esteem for the gentleman, having known him over so many years. I was quite attentive to what it was he was going to say and would have held my peace.

I will be very brief about the customary niceties of this maiden speech in order to save time for debate material on this subject of peacekeeping.

[*Translation*]

First of all, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Welland—St. Catharines—Thorold for being elected Speaker of this House and yourself for your appointment as acting speaker. As far as I was concerned, it was a small victory for democracy which we try to improve little by little.

[*English*]

I would also like to thank my wife, Paula, for 40 years of unflinching support for me and in particular for the last two years of support.

It is customary here to describe one's constituency. Let us just say that if one was to embellish all of the descriptions of constituencies heard so far in the House then that would describe Nanaimo—Cowichan. It cuts a swath of beauty from the tranquil Gulf Islands right across Vancouver Island to the wild and rugged west coast.

To my constituents in Nanaimo—Cowichan, I thank them for the honour of representing them in Ottawa. I will try to help you understand what is happening in Ottawa if I understand it myself. However, I will certainly represent your interests in Ottawa and not Ottawa's interests to you.

This brings us to the issue of the day which is peacekeeping and more particularly the situation in the former Yugoslavia. What do my constituents think? I believe that the people of Nanaimo—Cowichan, in common with many other Canadians, think as follows. We are proud of the record of Canadian peacekeepers. We are very proud of the troops who are there doing that job at the moment, the Royal 22^e Régiment de Valcartier.

However, Canada seems to be stumbling at the moment because of a lack of international leadership and political will.

• (1335)

We also appear to be short of armed forces personnel to properly meet all current obligations. Therefore, the government's proposed review of foreign affairs and defence policies is timely and welcomed. We must determine if our peacekeeping activities are in accordance with these policies or should these policies be changed.

My constituents see in the Bosnian situation the enmity of hundreds of years of religious and ethnic differences. There appears to be no way to end this hatred. At the same time, Canadians recognize that enmity of this sort is not confined to the Balkans. It is a world-wide problem which leads to atrocities and wars. The world community therefore must find better ways of dealing with it. The United Nations, NATO and the European Community are not perceived as being effective in dealing with the problem.

In response to the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs' statement this morning that he had been talking to his colleagues in France and Britain, it would be helpful to this House for us to know in