

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robinson:** Madam Speaker, I still believe that the economic sanctions already in place, can work without being tightened, and that their impact can even increase with time. Madam Speaker, we have evidence—

**Mrs. Gibeau:** What evidence?

**Mr. Robinson:** If it was not so, we could still tighten the sanctions. There are many ways to do so. But let's not forget, Madam Speaker, that economic sanctions have worked in other conflicts, such as in Rhodesia where they had quite an impact. They also worked in Nepal and in South Africa. However, to give up economic sanctions in favour of a catastrophic war would be pure madness.

[*English*]

**Hon. Gerald S. Merrithew (Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Madam Speaker, today this House is debating the grave Persian Gulf issue for the third time in three months. The stakes are much higher than they were on October 23 and on November 29 because today, January 15, 1991 the world faces the passing of a critical, political and military deadline.

The shameful aggression by Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi army in a savage attack on their Arab neighbour, Kuwait, has been universally deplored and condemned by the world's nations in an extraordinary display of united condemnation.

Kuwait was ruthlessly attacked, conquered, and annexed by Iraq, a country with the fourth-largest army in the world. Saddam Hussein has been neither repentant nor apologetic. Rather, he has made it clear that Kuwait is only one of a series of conquests yet to come, despite the fact that most of its neighbours are, like Kuwait, full-fledged sovereign members of the United Nations.

All Canadians are pondering the enormous risks inherent in the decision we will take here this week. The consequences of war are staggering and abhorrent. It is precisely for this reason that I welcome this opportunity to express my views in this historic debate.

For a Minister of Veterans Affairs, the prospect of war in the Persian Gulf is especially painful, as the brutal aftermath of any military conflict is an every day reality in my department. On a daily basis, we deal with men who were blinded during the trench warfare of World War I. Chemical warfare is nothing new to them. We look after men and women wounded in mind, body and spirit who will spend the rest of their days in rehabilitation centres, hospitals, nursing homes or psychiatric wards. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, no Minister of Veterans Affairs could regard another war with anything but dread and apprehension.

In the constituency I serve our war veterans would be the last to treat our country's entry into military conflict lightly. They went to war and saw the blood, the suffering, the destruction first-hand and the deaths.

It is for these profound reasons that this government has pursued consistently and diligently a peaceful resolution to this crisis. The legacy of our remaining veterans and of their comrades buried in foreign soil is still with us. The memory of their sacrifices has ensured that Canada seek all legitimate avenues for peace. This we have done and will continue to do.

Remaining true to their memory, however, demands that we respect why our veterans fought for Canada so bravely—to preserve freedom, to establish a new world order, and to fight naked, barbaric aggression. To adopt a posture of peace at all costs would violate their memory and invalidate their sacrifices. This we will not do.

Ironically, most Canadians living today never experienced the hardships of war. Over two-thirds of Canadians were not born until after World War II. Over 55 per cent of Canadians were born after the Korean war.

Many of our veterans, indeed the Canadian populace as a whole, know that something extremely important is at stake in the gulf, and that is, how far should the world go in thwarting naked and brutal aggression by the bullies of the world.

There are some stark lessons to be learned by an examination of history. That is clearly shown in the failure of the League of Nations between the two world wars. The lesson learned was that appeasement and a reluctance to deal with aggression in the past ended with abysmal failure and may have cost more lives in the long run.