

**Senator Murray:** If, indeed, some members of the other place intend to go to Baghdad, it would be on an unofficial basis. While our embassy in Baghdad might offer them the usual courtesies granted to members of Parliament visiting foreign countries, they would not have any official status. In other words, they would certainly not be there on behalf of the Government of Canada, nor authorized to enter into any discussion on behalf of the government.

● (1450)

I am not aware that there is any plan on the part of the Progressive Conservative caucus to send one of its members to Baghdad with this delegation, if indeed there is such a delegation.

**Senator Bonnell:** Honourable senators, I understand that Mr. Bob Corbett, an M.P. from New Brunswick, has received the approval of Mr. Joe Clark, M.P. from High River, to go as a member of the group with Mr. Axworthy of Winnipeg and Mr. Svend Robinson of B.C. in order that the three political parties be represented.

They have the approval of Mr. Clark and the Prime Minister. They are receiving advice from the Department of External Affairs, as well as the Canadian ambassador to Iraq. They have already been in contact with the Canadian ambassador to Iraq to obtain information on how to go about meeting these people over there.

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, if, indeed, my friend Mr. Corbett is going to Iraq with the Hon. Lloyd Axworthy and Mr. Svend Robinson, he will have the same status as Mr. Axworthy and Mr. Robinson—that is to say, an unofficial status. It is an unofficial visit.

As I explained a few moments ago, the Department of External Affairs and our embassy in Baghdad will offer to these people the same courtesies that they offer to my honourable friend during his frequent trips abroad, or to any other senator or Member of Parliament.

**Senator Bonnell:** Honourable senators, I am not 100 per cent convinced as to that last point. When I have gone abroad, it has not been through the Canadian embassy, and Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, arranged nothing for me.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Oh, oh!

**Senator Bonnell:** However, on this occasion I understand the trip has been arranged through the Department of External Affairs. These three gentlemen are being briefed by the Department of External Affairs and the Hon. Joe Clark is agreeing to their taking the trip. Is he agreeing to the trip with one eye shut and the other eye open; or does he openly say that he supports it or is against it?

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, the government has declined to send official representatives on this kind of mission. As I explained earlier, they are being briefed, of course, by External Affairs, as my honourable friend would be briefed by External Affairs if he were going to Baghdad and asked for such a briefing. When Messrs. Axworthy, Robinson and Cor-

bett arrive there they will be given the usual courtesies that are extended to parliamentarians by our embassy in Baghdad. That is the end of it.

The honourable senator should not seek to attach an official label to what is essentially an unofficial and, indeed, private visit.

**Senator Bonnell:** Honourable senators, I do not want to give the impression that I am against this visit. I think it is wonderful that three Members of Parliament are so concerned about Canadians being held hostage that they are trying to get them home. I wish to give them my full support. I think Bob Corbett, Svend Robinson and Lloyd Axworthy deserve a great deal of credit from Canadians. I am surprised that the Government of Canada is not more actively trying to save the lives of those Canadians who are being held hostage. Why does the government not come out and say why it is against this? The Japanese sent over a delegation to bring their people home, as did Germany. There are also other countries which are bringing their citizens home.

I simply want to congratulate those Members of Parliament for taking this initiative on their own. The government does not seem to care about Canadians who are being held hostage abroad. If there is any reason why the government is not doing anything about it, I would like to have the minister tell us.

**Senator Murray:** Honourable senators, so far it can be said of the government's policy with regard to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the threat that it poses to peace and stability in that area of the world, and in the world at large, that the government's policy is Canada's policy. It has enjoyed, generally speaking, bipartisan support. I think it ill behoves the honourable senator to try to make cheap political points from it.

However, let me tell him that Canada, through our ambassador to Iraq, and through the Iraqi ambassador to Canada, continues to press Iraq to release the 13 Canadians trapped in Kuwait and the 24 who are in Iraq. We have been doing that through the normal official channels.

We also fully support the UN resolutions which condemn the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and which also condemn the refusal by Iraq to release trapped foreign nationals.

Having said all that, I should state for the record, and in reply to the honourable senator, that Canada and other governments are unwilling to allow Canadians trapped in the Middle East to be used as bargaining chips in Iraq's attempt to wrest concessions from the world that is arrayed against it.

**Senator Bonnell:** Honourable senators, I do not know anything about bargaining chips. However, I do know that we have Canadian boys and girls over there whom we would love to have back home safe on our Canadian soil. I think the government should do everything it can to protect the lives of those people and to get them home into safe territory.

It seems that countries such as Japan, Germany and others can go over there to negotiate bringing their people home. I am not suggesting that we say that we will give them free wheat or that we will buy all their oil just because they will