

Government Orders

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): On a point of clarification, what the parliamentary secretary is proposing is not to do away with the 10 minute question and comment period but if there are no questions or comments, simply to expedite the debate by using it for another speaker. That is fine, Madam Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The motion is adopted. Resuming debate. The Associate Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Madam Speaker, as I rise today to participate in this most grave debate, I think we are all aware that the situation in the gulf has become very serious indeed. The Canadian government joins with all Canadians in sadness that a peaceful solution to the Persian Gulf crisis now appears improbable.

The questions that we are discussing during this debate, and the questions that obviously need to be answered are: Why is Canada involved? What is the Canadian interest? What are, if any, the opportunities for diplomacy or sanctions to work? If hostilities break out, what would be the role and the participation of the Canadians who are serving there with the Canadian Armed Forces?

Let me make it clear. In terms of the Canadian interest and why Canadians are involved, in my mind there is only one course. The only course is for Canada as in our tradition, as in our history, to stand with the world community in our resolute opposition to the brutal invasion of Kuwait and the disruption of order and stability in the Middle East that has followed.

Yes, such resolve does bring the risk of armed conflict, but in my mind the failure to stand as one with the world community would stand not only as a tragic betrayal of our history and of our collective security but would also devastate the United Nations as an instrument of global security.

I would ask my colleagues to reflect on the nature of the Hussein regime. We have heard others speak of this as well. This is a government, as we all know, that has not hesitated to use chemical weapons against its own population. It has promised to do the same if not worse, to Israel and Saudi Arabia. This breaches all international protocols and shows a complete disregard for the civilian populations of the region.

Iraq's quests for weapons of mass destruction is unhappily married to an approach to foreign policy that could only be called duplicitous.

If we in Canada do not oppose this callous use of force, I really fear that we will condemn the world to an environment where weapons will have triumphed over law, and the security and the well-being of all countries will be left to the forbearance of other men like Saddam Hussein. We will have turned from the rule of law to the rule of the jungle. This ominous future is simply unacceptable and must be spurned.

In trying to resolve this crisis since August 2, there has been more diplomacy, more symmetry, than we have probably seen ever, certainly in the history of this century. It has all come to naught.

It has come to naught for one reason because Saddam Hussein has slammed the door on every effort to try to find a peaceful resolution to force him to withdraw from Kuwait in a peaceful manner.

I congratulate all those who have been involved in those efforts. We heard last night from the Secretary of State for External Affairs about the role that he and the Prime Minister have played, along with other world leaders in making these efforts. But it all appears to have been to no avail.

Perhaps not surprisingly, because when I was in the gulf region just over the last 10-day period, I met with leaders in the gulf countries. They reminded me of one elemental thing that perhaps sitting back here in Canada we may find hard to believe. They said: "You can't treat Saddam Hussein like a statesman. You can't deal with him as you would with rational leaders and try to negotiate. He is not motivated by statesmanship. He is only motivated by terror and fear." That is the way that he has run his regime. So it is with sadness that we have seen that diplomacy has not worked.

What about sanctions? We have heard in this House so many members say that if we would just let sanctions work, that in and of itself would somehow persuade Saddam Hussein to get out of Kuwait. In my heart of hearts, I wish that were true, but wishing does not make it true. I think we have to look at the reality that we are faced with.

First of all, let us recall that when Saddam Hussein and his forces invaded Kuwait they pillaged that country. The savagery that they have displayed—the plundering, the executions of innocent people, the rape of women, and the murder of children—is something that quite honestly I never dreamed would exist in this century. I had really thought, naively perhaps, that the civilized world had come to a point that this would not happen.