

*Government Orders*

How many children, I ask, are suffering as a result of the Iraq aggression on Kuwait and the subsequent embargoes? How many more will suffer if counter-aggression is found to be the only solution in the Gulf crisis?

I ask this question, not as somebody who does not agree with the actions of the United Nations or the countries who have joined to date the peaceful demonstration against Iraq, but as a reminder for those of us who are in the position to make these decisions that will ultimately decide the fate of the thousands of children in Iraq and the surrounding countries.

• (1740)

This is why more decisions of this magnitude are taken and that extensive and effective consultation and debate are paramount to allow us to explore alternatives, to discuss various courses of action, and most importantly to understand fully the objectives and implications of our actions such as sending fighter jets designed for aggression right into the heart of the conflict. This cannot be done unilaterally by government. Actions such as these should be taken as a country because each and every one of us has something to lose either directly as our sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, our fellow Canadians go to potential war, or indirectly as we become party to the destructive and devastating effects of war.

Granted, the Prime Minister has committed funds to alleviate some of the suffering for the displaced in Iraq and for those surrounding countries affected by the crisis, but what about our Canadian farmers? What compensation has the minister offered them? I asked the Minister for External Relations that after her speech. She said the government does not have an answer.

Has the Prime Minister consulted with the farmers about the extent of the damage they are suffering or expect to suffer as the deadlock continues? No, he has not, although this should not be a surprise to anyone.

It has become astonishingly clear that in the last few years, be the issues domestic or international in nature, our right hon. Prime Minister does not believe in consulting Canadians. I am not sure who he consults to resolve these issues. However, since the United States invasion of Panama, one might guess that the opinion of the President of the United States takes precedence over any Canadian. In fact, in times of international crisis, one

may as well look to President Bush for his comments because our Prime Minister's opinions are merely a regurgitation of the president's.

Were the Prime Minister to listen to Canadians, he would have heard the overwhelming outrage regarding his support of the Panamanian invasion. He would have heard Canadians insist on the recall of Parliament to discuss our role in the Gulf. He would have heard coast to coast the insistence that were Canada to get involved in the Gulf crisis that it be done solely under the auspices of the United Nations.

It is an insult to those men and women who are in the Gulf today and to their families that Parliament was not recalled. It is an insult to our history, our integrity, and our identity that we are not able to act independently within the context of the international community. It is a political precedent set by the Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson, a precedent that became tradition, that Canada is a leader in institutions where diplomacy and peace-keeping activities are crucial.

Our party has always maintained collective action through the United Nations as a primary objective of Canadian foreign policy. The United Nations is today the most credible form for deliberation and subsequent co-operation through which we can hope to achieve international peace and security.

We have also maintained public consultation as an essential element to government policy, especially when it involved the deployment of Canadian forces, as was the case during the Korean crisis in 1950. Parliament was given full opportunity at the time to discuss Canadian military options and to endorse the use of Canadian forces in support of UN resolutions.

I would like to stress that when I say public consultation, I mean consultation before or at the time of, not after the fact, as has been the case on numerous occasions such as Canada joining the OAS. Even in our involvement in the United States-Mexico trade agreement, the Minister for International Trade made the decision to sit at the table with the U.S. and Mexico. Now he comes to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade and says: "Let's hear from Canadians what they think about it." The government already made the decision that we are into a trilateral agreement. Now he goes through the sham of listening to Canadians, after the fact.