

Middle East Peacekeeping Force

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1410)

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, I can hear shouts of glee from the other side of the House. I would point out that we all rejoice about the fact that the federalist option has prevailed over the separatist option.

However, Mr. Speaker, seeing the smiles of my friends on the other side, I fear that the leader of the Social Credit Party of Canada (Mr. Caouette) does not share the same impression.

Mr. Speaker, it would have been better a few moments ago if the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) had given us his statement in time so that we could consider it. Unfortunately, as usual, we received it two minutes before the House met and we have been unable to read through it. I think that hon. members will end up rising on a question of privilege. If members of all parts of the House wish for dialogue and solidarity, they on the other side of the House will have to extend to us a minimum of courtesy.

Generally speaking we are in agreement with the statement of the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Once more, the world nations called upon Canada and once more Canada is prepared to serve. The parties involved must admit Canada's impartiality on the national scene.

On Monday, October 22, my party, through my colleague from Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) welcomed with the Secretary of State for External Affairs the cease-fire requested by the Security Council under the joint auspices of the United States and the Soviet Union. Made again since then, this call for a cease-fire received a positive answer. The cease-fire is really a first step and fruitful negotiations may be expected now.

The application of the cease-fire calls for the co-operation of unbiased countries, of competent and representative countries at the world level.

We are delighted by the fact that Canada meets those sets of criteria and may contribute to the cease-fire and bring peace back to this part of the world.

It will be noted that, this time, important factors should be considered which distinguish the government's position from that we occupied at the time of the Viet Nam crisis, since today first the cease-fire exists, second, the UN, an international organization, is playing a major role in the application of the cease-fire and, third, the parties involved through normal diplomatic channels have clearly stated their position, expectations and reserves.

We approve Canada's participation to the extent of our resources and competence, both in the logistics field and in the communications field, to the peace effort in the Middle East. My colleague for Hillsborough stated as recorded on page 7075 of *Hansard* for October 22, 1973 and I quote:

[English]

I am sure all the people of Canada would want us, their representatives, to indicate that this country is prepared to make some efforts and, indeed, some sacrifices if, under the proper auspices and with reasonable hope for success, the kind of force the minister mentioned should be set up. I believe we should sacrifice

[Mr. Speaker.]

something for peace in the Middle East because in doing that we would be doing much more. We would be sacrificing something for the peace of the whole world.

There is no question that Canadians are desirous of a lasting peace and a lasting settlement in the Middle East. In this regard any participation on the part of our government through which we can assist in bringing that settlement about is worth while. Our previous experience in the Middle East and our experience in Viet Nam surely make any warnings I could offer the minister redundant. The perils of involvement without acceptance from both sides are obvious and clearcut. As my leader has stated, we have a duty to participate in any reasonable effort to bring peace in the Middle East. The government has a duty to satisfy itself that our involvement in the peacekeeping force will represent a meaningful contribution that cannot better be made by some other country. If that is the case, then involvement in the peacekeeping force is more than justified.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I should like to preface my remarks with a brief and mild protest over the fact that we received this important and sensitive statement about two o'clock as we walked into the House.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Brewin: However, Mr. Speaker, we in this party welcome the decision of the government to bring up for approval in the House this commitment by Canada to contribute to a peacekeeping force in the Middle East. In our view a commitment which involves Canadian personnel, substantial Canadian expenditures and risks outside Canada should be approved by the elected representatives in parliament even though the government may have the responsibility of making the decision in the first instance. This obligation is particularly clear in the situation of a minority government which we have at the present time.

Having said this, I can now say it is our view that the government's decision to participate as requested by the Secretary General of the United Nations is a decision which we will support. We think the government has a right to insist upon any such commitments being made through the United Nations which would have the moral authority of the Security Council and, through it, of the world community as a whole. Second, we think such a commitment should rightly be only undertaken with the consent of the immediate parties involved. We agree with the third condition made by the government, namely, that there should be some prospect that the peacekeeping force can serve a useful purpose. In our view these conditions have been fulfilled and, therefore, the commitment should be made.

The primary reason for saying this is that it is a contribution toward preserving the peace in one of the most explosive areas in the world. It is not simply that we deeply deplore the hostilities between Israel and her neighbours, not simply because we wish Israel in accordance with her creation as an independent state by the United Nations to continue to exist as an independent state and a state whose security is guaranteed by agreed and secured boundaries and the commitments of the world community as well as her neighbours, but also because the