

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien: He would have phoned the American President and urged him not to go to war at this time.

Has the Prime Minister spoken with President Bush since the deadline and, if so, did he urge President Bush not to go to war now?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have to admire my hon. friend for a number of reasons, not the least of which is his capacity to discern what might be in Mr. Pearson's mind today. That is truly a gift and I congratulate him on it.

Mr. Andre: Like Mackenzie King.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mulroney: It was the House leader who said Mackenzie King, not I.

But we can only go on the record with the contributions to the cause of peace of Mr. King, Mr. St. Laurent, and Mr. Pearson, all of which were very substantial and which contributed a great deal to establishing the traditions which we are respecting today.

I have been in regular communication with leaders around the world in regard to this important issue. The Secretary of State for External Affairs and I maintain at this very moment the pursuit of all possible alternatives that might give rise to a peaceful solution.

Mr. Gauthier: Like what?

Mr. Mulroney: The House leader for the opposition says: "Like what?" Like, for example, Saddam Hussein saying to the world: "Yes, I will respect for once the call of the world community. Yes, I will give an affirmative answer to the United Nations, thereby placing the world on a course to peace."

The obstruction does not come from France, Canada, the Dutch, or the Senegalese. The problem is with Saddam Hussein and he must say yes.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I put a question to the Prime Minister, and I want a very clear and very simple answer. Since yesterday, did the Prime Minister get in touch with the President of the United States, George Bush, and did he

ask Mr. Bush to wait before starting the war and give peace a chance in the Middle East? And, is war the Prime Minister's only alternative?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition is no doubt aware, we are constantly in touch with our allies on this matter.

As for his suggestion regarding Mr. Pearson, this is what Mr. Pearson said in similar circumstances in the House, on September 4, 1950:

[*English*]

It has been suggested that we could have made further efforts in regard to mediation and the employment of pacific measures in the Korean dispute. That, of course, as I see it, is not a realistic suggestion. Because, even when it was tried—and it was tried in the earlier days of this dispute—the aggressor treated that suggestion with contempt.

• (1420)

Mr. Pearson was right then. Canada had to act because the aggressor in 1950 treated them with contempt.

Today, Saddam Hussein is treating the world with contempt. Even at this late moment, we ask him, personally and we ask his government—to send a signal to the world that he will comply with the resolution of the United Nations. If he does, he will enable us all to seek and obtain a peaceful solution to this extremely difficult matter.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the Prime Minister that in 1950 the government of the day and Mr. Pearson, as Secretary of State for External Affairs, insisted that the troops going to war in Korea had to be there under the command of the UN and under the UN flag. It was not an American war. It was a United Nations war.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien: If the Prime Minister does not want to tell us whether or not he talked with the President of the United States, will he tell us if he has taken any initiative today with the Secretary-General of the United Nations; yesterday he was still making efforts to find a peaceful solution and there should have some discussions with the Secretary-General in order to find a peaceful solution? January 15 was not the date to start the war. We could be in a war position, but we are not yet in a war position. Can peace still have a chance?