

Yet, what I have just described is only one aspect of the economic consequences of the gulf crisis. Not unlike in the case of collective security considerations, the weakest economies stand to lose the most in this crisis. Third World countries will be hard hit. As I pointed out earlier, because of the economic instability engendered by the crisis, these countries will experience ever more difficulties to escape from indebtedness, poverty, illness, and inadequate and underdeveloped infrastructures.

What about the countries of central and eastern Europe that have just been freed from the futile yoke of the Communist régime? They need us. They need our assistance and our support. A good many of these people are net importers of oil to heat their homes and to keep their industrial machinery going.

There is undoubtedly another and more important reason to take action, and it is our moral conscience. The ruthless invasion by a military and aggressive power of a weak and defenseless neighbour is inexcusable, unjustifiable, immoral and reprehensible. How could we remain passive and unconcerned in the presence of the systematic use of murder, theft, rape and plundering? We could not.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, we must stand up and be counted. That is exactly what the government did following the invasion of Kuwait. That is why the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State External Affairs worked so hard to ensure that the international community's response would be through the UN. That is why we have supported the UN's resolutions against Iraq. That is also the reason we joined the international forces in the Persian Gulf area. We have supported all negotiations and diplomatic initiatives in an effort to find a peaceful solution to this crisis. As a matter of fact, as the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State indicated today, we continue to support them.

For the past five months, the international community has offered the Iraqi government various peaceful ways out, each time to no avail. The Iraqi government seems to believe that the coalition is fragile and that our determination is weak.

The Iraqi government is wrong. It is unfortunate, if not outright tragic, that such a government be blinded by cynical and grandiose ambitions. Needless to say, it is not

the first time in the history of the world that such plans have been so grossly miscalculated.

• (1810)

We want our allies, the weaker and more vulnerable countries of the world, and Iraq to know that Canada will not shy away from its international commitments. When the time comes to re-establish international peace and order, to ensure collective security and the well-being of the weakest and neediest, the international community can always count on Canada.

That is why I ask all my hon. colleagues, from both sides of the House, to go beyond party considerations and support the effort of our great country within the international coalition. The purpose is not only to help the Kuwaiti government and people, but to safeguard the international order, the only guarantee for the well-being and security of the weakest and most vulnerable countries in the world.

Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur): Mr. Speaker, I first want to congratulate the minister on his speech, and then I would like to take this opportunity to ask two questions.

My first question is this: Is his government in favour of a peace conference on current problems in the Middle East? Second, if Canada gets involved in this war, does the government intend to cut services and programs here in Canada or does it intend to raise taxes to finance our contribution?

Mr. Loiselle: I want to thank the hon. member for Restigouche—Chaleur for his questions.

With regard the international conference, I believe Canada has already indicated during the past months and years that there is a series of problems in the Middle East that should be dealt with. I believe that our country's position in this respect is quite clear.

It would, however, be highly inappropriate to establish a direct link between such a conference and our response to Saddam Hussein. We would be telling Saddam Hussein: "Dear Mr. President of Iraq. Since you leave us no other alternative and since you have invaded this country and destroyed its population and tried to erase every trace of most of its citizens, thus eliminating a member State of the United Nations, as a reward, and to show that we understand your message, we are going to