

Government Orders

I believe that no one in the House disagrees with the need to deal with Saddam Hussein and his Armed Forces. Rather, it seems what has divided us has been the best means of how we go about doing it.

I do not think the choice is simply between war and peace. I cannot believe that any of us honestly opt for war if we did not have to end aggression. We do not want it, but he has brought it upon a small country next door.

What has really been at issue is the best viable means to go about having Saddam Hussein move out of Kuwait. I am fully in support of peace. I do not relish the thought of warfare that is going on or the loss of any human life. I am like the Prime Minister of Canada in that we believe that all diplomatic means must have been looked at and examined before January 15 and up to January 16, the day the war started.

In my riding of Sarnia—Lambton, one does not have to go far to find support for this line of thought. On Monday of this week, about 100 local residents demonstrated in front of my constituency office calling for a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

Throughout last week, I have also met with a number of other constituents, with ministers of congregations, and received a number of telephone calls, and facsimile messages, all echoing the—

Mr. Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Madam Speaker, I apologize for interrupting the hon. member on this point of order, but there was an announcement that 350,000 Iraqis have been killed so far.

I wonder if the government might come forward to confirm that number of casualties for us and that those casualties are still accumulating. I think the House needs to know that information.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I do not think this is really a point of order, but I take it that what the hon. member is saying, and I am sure that should it become necessary, the House will be kept informed.

The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Mr. James: Madam Speaker, on the other side of the coin, a number of my constituents has also expressed support for compliance with UN resolution 678 to restore international peace and order in the gulf area.

On an issue of this magnitude and complexity, none of us can be said to have all the information or all the answers. As such we must respect the views and the emotions of all sides of this issue.

As parliamentarians we have to make decisions on the basis of the information available to us from all sources. We listen to our constituents, experts and other Canadians; analyse the information provided to us by the government; read the newspapers; and watch all sorts of coverage and information we get our hands on.

Sometimes, coupled with gut feelings, experience and instinct, we put things on the balance sheet and assess the pros and cons. In looking at this issue in this debate, we must begin by understanding why Canada is involved. Historically Canadians have been happy to have their government support NATO as a participant and as a leader. Why? Because of our size and our lack of military might. International order is of utmost importance to us.

The essence of our position is to support the United Nations in its resolutions. We are involved in defence of our own interests in the United Nations and in the invasion of any small member state. We are not involved in a unilateral initiative, but in a collective initiative involving more than 28 countries.

In particular, Canada is concerned about the Iraqi aggression as an affront to international law and a critical challenge to new international order of which Canada is such an advocate.

First, we had to consider economic sanctions and continued diplomacy. Assuredly, this was everyone's first and preferred choice. No one wanted to use force and everyone fears the madness and the cost of going to war.

Second, over the past months we have witnessed the systematic dismemberment of Kuwait. The December report by Amnesty International has already outlined the horrors and human rights atrocities experienced by the people of Kuwait: the reports of brutalization, rape, torture, forcible ejection, and so on.

What would be left to liberate had we waited too long?

Third, were the sanctions effective? Certainly, international trade has slowed. Yet, who is being most affected? Even Maude Barlow who had visited Iraq said on TV that only the poor were being affected. Saddam Hussein