

Government Orders

Mr. Brewin: Not at all. What do you do? Check your brains at the door when you go into the office of the Security Council? Not at all. You don't check your brains at the door. You exercise judgment. You reflect Canadian opinion. You are sensitive to what the world requires in this. The government cannot simply be a lap dog to the superpowers of the UN. It is expected to exercise judgment. That is what it is there for.

The second proposition must be clear. No one in this House forgives what Iraq did on August 2. We all start together on the proposition that Iraq is an international criminal. It has broken international law in invading Kuwait. We go further. The regime of Saddam Hussein has one of the worst human rights records in the world. Saddam Hussein is dangerous to his neighbours and to the world. He has developed and shown a capacity to use chemical weapons against his own people. He has developed and used biological weapons. He is in the process of developing nuclear weapons. It is a regime which is unacceptable to civilized opinion around the world. The acts that he committed on August 2 and, subsequently, in Kuwait are not forgivable.

• (1640)

This party takes second place to no one in its condemnation of Iraq's actions and of Saddam Hussein's regime. What we do say is that the issue before this House and before the international community is how to deal with the breach of international law committed by Iraq. It is at this point that we begin to differ from the approach of the government, the Government of the United States, and the other superpowers.

What we say is that while Iraq is a dangerous enemy, the United States, in compiling military force and seeming to be dogged in its persistence that military force is the only solution, is a dangerous ally. It is a necessary to send a message, not just to Iraq but to the hawks in the United States who we watched on television just last Thursday. They seemed to treat war as some kind of football game.

It is absolutely important that Canada speak as a peace-maker in the world, that Canada speak at the United Nations as the voice of caution, as the voice of wisdom, as the voice of peace, and not as the voice of war.

There are two propositions which I submit are virtually self-evident. First, sanctions are working in Iraq. The minister has said it. The Canadian forces in the Persian Gulf are employed in seeing that the UN boycott is effective. They are doing an outstanding job, as are the other forces that are enforcing the boycott. Iraq's neighbours are enforcing the boycott: Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. The countries of the Middle East, as the minister indicated, are united in the proposition that the sanctions must be made effective.

Estimates are that they are 99.9 per cent effective. But, equally, the government would have the world community ignore all the evidence of expert opinions that it takes time for sanctions to succeed in the sense that they affect the behaviour of regimes. We have seen in South Africa that it took years for sanctions to bite. In Rhodesia it took years for sanctions to bite. I submit it will not take years in Iraq. It will take months, but those months should be invested to avoid war, because in the Iraq situation there is absolute unity of the international community in the enforcement of sanctions.

Further, Iraq has come into this situation virtually bankrupt. Iraq invaded on August 2, 1990 simply because it was broke after a 10-year war with Iran. For months prior to August 2—and the minister indicated some of this in his speech—it was going cap in hand to its Arab neighbours, Kuwait, Egypt and other countries, to the Arab League, seeking a handout because of the financial condition it was in. When it failed to get that and when, I might add, the United States failed to give it the appropriate signals in terms of a response to invasion, Iraq took its fate into its own hands. That was not only illegal, it was a serious miscalculation. But it should be understood that Iraq has gone into this situation in a very weakened position and that the effect of sanctions is going to be that Iraq's capacity to continue will be rapidly eroded.

The Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade of the House has been hearing witnesses. The witnesses have persistently said that sanctions will take four, six, eight, or ten months before they work. It is our view that the effect of war is going to be so catastrophic that it is critical that the international community give sanctions every opportunity to work. Sanctions combined—