

Government Orders

Our words here by themselves will not decide war and peace, yet we in this House should not in any way diminish the importance of what we say. Above all, we should not diminish the importance of where Canada stands in these very grave days.

• (1650)

Let us be clear from the outset. All of us in this House are united in our desire to see Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. While we may have differing views as to how that should come about, we are all agreed on that objective.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, I am glad that the government recalled Parliament. As parliamentarians we have important decisions to make, but each member, like each Canadian, has a moral problem. We are all convinced that war is frightening and we have always been in favour of peace. But at what price? We can say that collective security is at stake and that we must act quickly, but then we can also plead for more time to make the sanctions work. We all know that Iraq has rejected any diplomatic initiative, any compromise, any avenue for a potential settlement, whether it comes from France, Jordania, Yemen, the United Nations, Javier Perez de Cuellar, Egypt, Algeria, and so on.

I think that the members who spoke before me gave a good description of the horrors of war, but the basic question is this: What alternative is left if sanctions, diplomatic moves and threats fail before the intransigence of Saddam Hussein? As a nation we have always defended the principle of the sovereignty of our country. We have been and still are among the highly respected members of the United Nations, so how could we choose to ignore our commitments in this instance?

[*English*]

The matter which seizes us today transcends the merely personal, the merely partisan, and the seeking of political advantage.

This Parliament and our country, Canada, are faced with a clear choice. We can continue to stand behind the United Nations and its resolutions for which we voted and which told Iraq what it must do to avoid war.

We can remain an integral part of the most determined demonstration of collective political will ever marshalled by the United Nations to stand up against aggression. In my view it is the choice which all our history and the long tradition of Canada's support for the United Nations oblige us to make today.

To do otherwise would repudiate the votes we have unfailingly cast in support of the United Nations resolutions. It would also repudiate our commitment to internationalism and to the United Nations, the hallmarks of the Liberal Party and Canada's foreign policy for decades.

At the very moment when the United Nations has moved itself to take a strong, unambiguous and collective stand against a brutal aggressor, Canada should not break solidarity with the nations that are standing united against Iraq.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): To do so would give Saddam Hussein what he has been trying unsuccessfully to achieve by every desperate means these past months and weeks.

It has been said that Canada should not stand up to Hussein because this is a dispute about oil on the other side of the world, that it is not in Canada's interests to become embroiled.

Others have compared a war in the gulf to Vietnam, saying it would be an American war for American interests. It has also been argued that the Persian Gulf countries were the creation of occupying colonial powers and many of these nations are mere fiefdoms with capricious and arbitrary borders.

The most persuasive argument against the use of force is that sanctions should be given more time to work.

In my view all these reasons are in the end invalid. None of them justifies any weakening of the collective will now mustered to hold to the United Nations resolutions.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Yes, there is oil at stake in this dispute. If this aggression were allowed, Hussein would control nearly one-quarter of the world's supply of oil. The prospect of being in thrall to him for oil is particularly ominous. To the United States, to Canada, and to other wealthy countries with their own