

*Government Orders*

order to bring this to a halt and to get Iraq out of Kuwait. That is what this is all about.

**Mr. J. W. Bud Bird (Fredericton—York—Sunbury):** Madam Speaker, the tragic reality of hostilities which commenced in the Persian Gulf last night have made this resolution and debate very much redundant today.

• (1630 )

This is particularly so because all members have quite properly and patriotically pledged their support, hopes and prayers on behalf of Canada's Armed Forces now engaged in the conflict.

It is important that such a spirit of united concern be displayed for our men and women who are serving there and for their families remaining here at home.

I take considerable pride that on such a serious occasion and for such a compelling purpose, partisan lines of conflict can be set aside and we can come together as parliamentarians in common cause.

Having said that, I think it is also important to be clear about our positions as we have led up to the circumstances in which we now find ourselves.

The hard decisions of commitment are now behind us. There has been vigorous and legitimate debate as those decisions have been reached, first in November when the government's position for Canada to support the United Nations in the Persian Gulf was adopted and, more recently, in the past two days as that position was to be reaffirmed.

The record will show clearly how views were expressed, and I will deal only with my own. I am not naive about the party system, and I have had extensive experience with and respect for the necessity and values of party discipline in financial matters and on normal policy issues.

Frankly though, I have been troubled by the implications of opposition calls this week for a free vote as though to say that members of any party would be willing to subordinate themselves and their consciences to the party line on such a high moral issue of principles such as this.

The facts are that no self-respecting member of Parliament should be easily led between war and peace. From the government side, I can only tell you that the

leadership has been superlative both on the public stage and in the privacy of caucus.

The performance of the Prime Minister, of the Secretary of State for External Affairs and of the Minister of National Defence have been exemplified in their respective presentations to this House of Commons over the last few months about these matters but never more full of logic, conscience and commitment than in these most recent days.

If there is unanimity on the government side about the difficult decisions which have been made, and I can only assert my own position, it is because those decisions are believed to be the right ones and not because they have been imposed. Free vote or not, I repeat that the choices between war and peace cannot be forced upon the integrity of any individual unless he or she is prepared to accept them.

In the original debate, on November 28 to be exact, I spoke in support of the resolution for Canada's participation in the United Nations actions to expel Iraq from Kuwait.

With time and events now having overtaken us, I can say again with conscience and conviction that Canada has no alternative but to act with its allies in the United Nations to stop Saddam Hussein's aggression now or to risk a greater catastrophe in the future.

In that first debate, I stated very clearly my own instincts to work for peace at almost any cost and to avoid conflict, except as a very last resort. I said with equal clarity, however, that although peace is the goal we all seek, history has taught us that sometimes to ensure peace or to restore it, we must even be prepared to fight in war.

Such a peace was lost, and such a war was started by Saddam Hussein on August 2, 1990. Now, finally, more than five months later on January 16, 1991, Canada has joined with other members of the United Nations to turn his invading armies out of Kuwait.

I supported that role for Canada when I spoke in November, and I continue to support that role now.

There were personal decisions that I did not reach easily or without deep, personal reflection. However, I want to make it abundantly clear that they were my own and were not in any way imposed upon me.