

### Oral Questions

My question to the Prime Minister is this. What initiatives are being taken by his government today, January 15, to either participate or to initiate peace proposals and options to war?

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, one of the proposals that has come forward in the last 36 hours is a proposal by the Government of France that is being considered in the Security Council. It contains six elements. The most important is the first because it requires a very clear signal on the part of Iraq that it will take actions immediately to respect the Security Council resolutions.

The other five points in that proposal reflect to a remarkable degree the proposals that were contained in a letter written by the Prime Minister of Canada to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, which I delivered to him the night before he left for Baghdad. Those proposals had been drawn from conversations that the Prime Minister and I, the Minister of National Defence, the Associate Minister and others, have had with various leaders of other countries, including several in the Arab world. One of the realities of which we are acutely conscious is that very often countries will say things to Canada that they will not say to superpowers or will not say to countries which are directly involved in negotiations.

As a result of that good standing of Canada, we were able to take these various proposals, synthesize them and draw from them what we considered to be elements of a potential proposal. Those elements were in the possession of the Secretary General when he went to Baghdad. He was deeply appreciative of the Canadian initiative. As I understand it, he did not have the opportunity to discuss those with Saddam Hussein because Saddam Hussein was not prepared to discuss at that time even the least adherence to Security Council resolutions.

Those same principles, with some changes in nuance, have arisen again in the French proposal. It may be that in these more public circumstances Saddam Hussein may be encouraged to respond to them. We hope he does. We hope that there is some movement in the hours that remain in this period that was deliberately established by the United Nations as a period for peace. We are supporting a proposal. We are discussing with the British a proposal that they have brought forward. We are waiting for results of conversations that the Yemeni have had to see if those conversations may lead to some proposal.

I will be taking part later in the debate and will be outlining a range of the other initiatives that Canada has taken over the last five weeks with a purpose which I believe is entirely shared in this House that we should seek to resolve this peacefully if that is at all possible.

Where we disagree in this House is what we do if it appears that peaceful means are not possible. Do we then support the United Nations as we want to do, or do we walk away from it?

**Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that overview, but surely Canadians are looking for a government that is not prepared simply to hope but that is prepared to act.

[*Translation*]

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Ms. McLaughlin:** Mr. Speaker, there is no decision more critical or far-reaching than the decision to wage war. It is a matter of life and death. It is a moral issue, involving one's conscience. All of us will be judged by his or her conscience and by history.

My question is directed to the Prime Minister. Will he tell the members of his caucus that for this vote at least, probably the most important in their political lives, there will be a free vote on this war issue?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** The government follows a policy which is in the national interest of all Canadians, based on the responsibilities of an important country such as Canada. This morning I defined the parameters of these policies and obligations and the policy I stated this morning will be supported by all government members.

[*English*]

**Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

Recently, a Canadian forces spokesperson confirmed that in addition to flying escort patrols over Canadian forces ships in the gulf, our CF-18s will also be flying escort for U.S. B-52 bombers.

How can a CF-18 that is flying on an offensive mission with a U.S. B-52 bomber be considered in a defensive position? What has this got to do with our ships in the gulf? Is this not a serious contradiction and a change from the defensive policy that Canada has been following in the gulf so far?