

Adjournment Debate

I want to conclude simply by saying that at a time when our national economic house is on fire, this government seems content simply to do some pre-Christmas housecleaning, and that is just not good enough.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES—POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION IN SINAI DESERT PEACEKEEPING OPERATION. (B) REQUEST FOR DETAILS OF PROPOSED PARTICIPATION

Hon. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, when I put my name down for an adjournment debate it was because of the questions I asked on November 2 to which I received what I thought were, if not unsatisfactory replies, certainly incomplete replies. The questions had to do with the proposed peacekeeping force in the Sinai Desert.

● (2200)

As reported at page 12389 of *Hansard*, in my question I quoted an Associated Press report which stated "Canada says it will participate but has not yet been asked". Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could have your attention. If you don't mind, Mr. Speaker, I would like to carry on this debate without being interrupted. Thank you.

When this question was asked, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan) replied that they are talking about it. He said, "We have given it some consideration, but I have no further announcement to make at this time".

Let us look at what the newspapers have been saying since this was first raised. I quote as follows from the June 29 issue of the *Montreal Gazette*:

MacGuigan told reporters on Friday that Canada has not received an invitation and is not likely to.

I quote from *The Globe and Mail* of June 26:

In Ottawa, a spokesman for the Department of External Affairs said Canada has not been formally requested to provide troops for the peacekeeping force, but added that External Affairs Mark MacGuigan would consider such a request.

Mr. MacGuigan has recently cast doubt on Canada's participation in a project that is not sponsored by the UN. Ottawa is apparently not eager to ally itself with the Camp David accords while trying to improve relations with the Arab world.

I quote from *The Globe and Mail* of May 22:

—Defence Minister Gilles Lamontagne said a request for Canadian troops would be favourably considered. . . . The United States is certain to provide the main body of peacekeeping troops because Israel wants a U.S. role as added protection against attack.

Mr. Lamontagne's reported comments are the strongest indication yet that Canada is ready to take part. The Defence Minister is reported to have said the issue has not yet come up in cabinet.

This leaves the entire country in a state of bewilderment as to whether Canada is committing troops to the Sinai peace force or not. As members realize, it was originally thought up at the Camp David accord between Egypt, Israel and the United States. It is not a UN peacekeeping force. Among the precepts that have been clearly set out by a former Liberal secretary of state for external affairs, it is stated quite clearly that before Canada commits a peacekeeping force, it would want it to be preferably under UN Control.

I would like to read a few words by Professor John Holmes, a counsellor at the Canadian Institute of International Affairs and Bissell professor of Canadian-American relations at the University of Toronto. He said in June:

Participation, however, raises tough problems. Although the force would be for surveillance only, the main component might well be American and thus misconstrued as the U.S. Rapid Deployment Force of which all Arabs are wary. . . . Whatever the good intentions of Washington, we would find ourselves an adjunct of their foreign and defence policy over which we would have little influence. . . . In a crisis Canadians could be asked to act as we had never intended. Who would be in command?

I will refer to what the Hon. Mitchell Sharp set out as being the precepts that should apply if Canada is thinking about getting involved. They are:

(3) The peacekeeping force should be responsible to a political authority, preferably the United Nations.

(6) Canadian participation in the force must be acceptable to all concerned.

(8) There must be an agreement and equitable method of financing the operation.

I submit that several of these criteria have not been complied with today. John R. Walker, of Southam News, a very learned journalist in this area, wrote:

Finally the Canadian government will want to know what is happening to the two massive military air bases Israel has at Etzion and Eitam in the Sinai. The U.S. military has been eyeing both these highly sophisticated bases for some time, egged on by Israelis who hate to see the equipment lost.

The Americans would love to have these bases available for their proposed Rapid Deployment Force—

I would like now to turn to the other questions I asked. There were three questions: whether there was a commitment, whether Parliament would be consulted before any commitment was made, and how many troops were involved. Further to that, I would like to point out that in evidence given before the Senate committee looking into the state of the armed forces this year, Brigadier General P. J. Mitchell, Director general, Land Doctrine and Operations, Department of National Defence said:

● (2205)

—if the NATO deployment and augmentation plans that have been described to you already were implemented, there would remain in Canada, available for deployment to an Arctic threat such as you describe, barring any other commitments beyond the NATO commitments you have talked about, a battalion-sized unit in eastern Canada and a battalion-sized unit in western Canada that would be available for such tasks.

The other day I asked if the government will explain to our NATO allies whether, if we send a sizeable force to Sinai, we