

Government Orders

fully aware of the experience they had just been through. Granted they had not been back long, but it seems to me they had not received as thorough a training as they should have had, given the type of work they were expected to do.

Going back to what my colleague just said, that we needed to establish criteria, to give very clear mandates, to have a sound financial basis and so on, I would like to know if he thought about the training of the troops, if he thought about that aspect of the issue?

• (2120)

On that point, does he agree with the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra who talked about the need, for example, to explain to young militiamen what is at stake politically so that they would not only understand the tactics and get the sophisticated training they need to face whatever danger they will encounter, but also learn the social and political dimensions of the type of intervention they will be asked to perform in those countries.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the member for Kootenay East want to treat that as a question or as a representation? Does he wish to reply?

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, I would like to reply by saying that I do believe our soldiers must receive all the training required without any question and at whatever cost. However I do not know there is any possible way that people can be trained for the emotional scars that occur in a theatre of war.

Mr. John Bryden (Hamilton—Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, I found the remarks of the hon. member to be very informative. I was very struck by his suggestion that we bring sound business practices to what is essentially war.

Would the hon. member mind elaborating on how we put humanitarian aid on a sound financial footing?

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, the member has suggested humanitarian problems. Obviously these things happen very quickly.

In terms of humanitarian activity, the situation in the former Yugoslavia is such that there are combatants creating serious difficulties for the humanitarian aid to come through. May I suggest there has to be a logical businesslike approach to see if we or any other peacekeeping nation or force is actually going to be able to accomplish the purpose.

There must be intervention in terms of the supplies and those kinds of things but the question always must be: Can we get it there? I believe that is measurable.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, since the question and comment period is almost over, I will be brief.

I may not have understood exactly what the hon. member said about the cost of humanitarian interventions. I would like him to explain again what he thinks about the money being spent on peacekeeping operations. Does he think that we should maintain or even increase the amount spent in this area, even if it means reducing other expenditures in the military? Does he consider the money spent on humanitarian intervention a priority?

[English]

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Speaker, the point the member raises is a valid one. I hold in my hand some photocopies of an article in the *Globe and Mail* on the weekend in which our Minister of National Defence was quoted as saying that there was going to be some pretty stiff medicine. The headline was: "Cuts are going to be deep".

This is part of the measurement. This is part of the decision-making process the Canadian people must make. Is this something they are prepared to commit to? If so, in terms of dollars and cents they will have to commit those dollars and cents.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment to your new office and wish you the best in your responsibilities in the chair. I would like to express my thanks to the government for putting this matter on the agenda so we as representatives of the Canadian people are able to express a view prior to the decision being made. I think that is very commendable in a new government expressing and acting as an open government. I want to say thanks for that in my remarks tonight as I stand before the House of Commons.

• (2125)

A variety of aspects have been enunciated and clearly defined before this assembly. What I wanted to do tonight was to express encouragement to those who have served in Bosnia and to express encouragement to those who have to make the decision on what we do as a country in the weeks and the months ahead.

Tonight we address a very special problem and have a very special responsibility in defining our peacekeeping role in the future and especially what our role will be in Bosnia. Our recommendations and our subsequent actions will have a significant impact on the former Yugoslavia and on the lives of those who are coping in what I would call the bloodiest European battlefield since the second world war.

Canadians from coast to coast have been made witnesses to the tragic events that have taken place in the Balkans. Every night on television we see the effects of the day's mortar blasts. Every day we read articles detailing the plight of those unfortunate enough to be caught in the crossfire.