

Government Orders

him for that also. He has made a remarkable contribution to the discussion in caucus. We are not allowed to refer to that, but it has been admirable. I would like to put to him a simple question.

Would he please expand on his opinion that more than ever the time has come to announce an international conference on all the issues in the Middle East? That in such a case, the Prime Minister of Canada should, without fear, show leadership at the United Nations through his Secretary of State for External Affairs in attempting a last great initiative. I ask my colleague to comment in a friendly way on what I have just said.

• (1940)

Mr. Assad: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his very kind words. Of course, for years that we have hoped that some nations, be it from Europe or America, would finally decide to have an international conference on the situation in the Middle East. There is no doubt that it would have been the greatest pride my country could have given me if Canada had taken the lead and told the United Nations that the time has finally and inevitably come to have an international conference to solve the problems of the Middle East, to remedy the injustices of the past,—to ensure that the Lebanese live in peace in their country, that the Palestinians find a place to rest their heads, and that Israel be safe from aggressors within guaranteed borders. But as long as the situation is such in the Middle East that we tolerate countries that have no notion of democracy but have an extremely important resource, as long as we refuse to face the real problems in the Middle East, we cannot expect that this conflict will be resolved by miracle or force. Even if they blew up three-quarters of the Middle East, it would not solve the problem.

If there ever was a time, I say that this time has come, and maybe this is the message that the opposition—as much from the Liberal Party as from the New Democratic Party—would like to send to this government and to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for External Affairs, asking them to make this last effort, to take this initiative to the United Nations and say that if an international conference can help to settle this matter, than let us propose it. That is to be hoped for.

Mrs. Deputy Speaker: Other questions or comments? Resuming debate. The hon. member for Bourassa.

Mrs. Marie Gibeau (Bourassa): Madam Speaker, the stakes of the issue we are discussing tonight are extremely high and I would like to say that I was struck by the sincerity, the seriousness and the thoughtfulness of the speeches of the members who spoke before me.

Most of the people in my riding of Bourassa, like most of our fellow Canadians, are not experts in international politics. They do not spend their days trying to grasp the nuances and the vagaries of international relations. They spend their days earning a living and trying to improve the well-being of their family. Nevertheless, they are well-meaning people who rely on common sense to judge what is happening. When faced with issues such as Canadian participation in the gulf crisis, they are in the habit of asking direct and practical questions. They want to know why Canada got involved in this crisis. After all, is it not a far region and is it not a conflict between Arab countries trying to gain control of a greater share of oil? Why should we put in jeopardy the lives of hundreds of men and women, some from Montreal North, for a question of oil? What does this mean for people in my riding of Bourassa, for Quebecers, and for Canadians?

Although it is always tricky to try to explain complex situations with analogies, they can often illustrate the fundamentals of a question. In my opinion an invasion is neither more nor less than a robbery. Taking control of the territory of a neighbouring country is like stealing from a neighbour, and even worse, it is like beating neighbour to steal his property.

In the case of Kuwait the neighbour in question supplied a good part of the oil the world needs. Consequently, the robbery is of concern not only to the two parties. It involves the whole community. If the community does not intervene to prevent the robbery and the violence, which neighbour is going to be the next victim? That is the crux of the issue in this debate.

We cannot tolerate such acts because of the consequences for everyone and because, according to our principles and moral values, such acts are unacceptable and intolerable. If we do not tolerate aggression and violence in our towns and cities, why on earth should we tolerate aggression and violence in the international community?