

*Government Orders*

decision. Why? It is because I look at this country and I ask the question: Who are we? Who is this country? What is this country called Canada? What is our history? What are our traditions? Where do we come from? What is our track record?

I have only to go back a few years. It might be embodied in what is called the Pearsonian tradition, a tradition established by a Prime Minister of this country, an absolutely outstanding Secretary of State for External Affairs back in the 1950s. If that man had chosen the easy way out, he could have supported the British and supported the French at Suez, but he showed some strength, some vision, and said to the world: "There must be a better way". He chose a better way. He articulated a better way, and the world saw wisdom in that better way. And Lester Bowles Pearson won the Nobel Peace Prize for that effort. That is where the Pearsonian tradition started.

Mr. Pearson was the Prime Minister of Canada, when the President of the United States, Lyndon Baines Johnson, decided to escalate the Vietnam war. Did Mr. Pearson join the Vietnam war with alacrity, with enthusiasm? No, because he saw a better role for Canada, a better alternative.

I think it is very easy to align with a superpower, to align with what is perhaps, at the given moment, the popular opinion. It takes guts and it takes toughness to offer something that is different, something that is perhaps not that popular at the moment. But Mr. Pearson offered an alternative and he showed wisdom.

That is just a part of our tradition. Let us look at it another way and remember that I asked the question: Who are we Canadians? We are a small country. As a military power we are diminutive, tiny. We are small potatoes when it comes to a military power, particularly when we compare our military power to that of the United States or the Soviet Union.

When it comes to a world problem like the conflict in the Persian Gulf, should we choose a military role? Is that the role where we can make the most significant contribution? I suggest not. Given the size of this country, the resources of this country, the tradition of this country, and the history of the country, we should be peaceseekers. We should be looking for a peaceful

solution to this conflict and now to this war. It is not easy. It will try our patience, but I think it is absolutely compelling on the part of this country to choose that kind of a role.

Another thing is that there are many dimensions of war, not just the fighting dimension—and this has been pointed out by other members of this House—such as the military dimension, the humanitarian dimension, the negotiating dimension, and the possible truce dimension or the actual peace dimension. There is a whole range of dimensions. That is where we as a country should be fitting in.

• (1910)

As far as I know, the war is not going to go on forever. Somebody is going to have to engage in talks. Somebody is going to have to engage in negotiations. If there is a truce effected, somebody will have to be a party to that truce. Somebody will have to maintain the truce and help with that truce. The same goes with peace.

Is there a better country in this world than Canada? I suggest not. I think about the government's decision and, as I say, I respect the government's decision. But, truly, I say to myself: given our history and our traditions and what we might be able to contribute and offer, I think we have let ourselves down and the world down. I expected better. I wanted better.

Let me address for just a moment the application of war which I have said earlier is an example of defeat and failure. Another thing about war is that there is absolutely no guarantee it will produce the desired result. There is no guarantee that when we enter into war, we are going to get what we want.

When it comes to this war, even though I do not share in the decision, what do I want from it? Just like the Conservatives across the way, I want it to be short, I want it to be decisive, and I want Saddam Hussein out of there. I pray to God that there will be few casualties, that all our men and women in that theatre of war will come home alive, and that none of them comes home in a so-called body bag. That is my desire. I am sure that that is the desire of every individual MP in this House. Is there any guarantee that that is going to happen? There is no guarantee.