

Special Debate

should it be all the countries that belong to the United Nations sharing the cost? I think the answer is clear.

The United Nations' charter calls upon the member nations to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. The charter calls for a deeper understanding for the rights of minorities, including protection for the more vulnerable groups in societies such as women and children.

How will the action in Somalia affect the way we handle the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina? Is the international community prepared to take the same risks on behalf of the innocent women and children in Bosnia-Herzegovina as in Somalia?

• (2050)

This morning our critic chaired a round table on the problems of Bosnia-Herzegovina and we had Canadians of Serbian, Croatian, Albanian, Greek and Bosnian descent there. It was a true Canadian way of debating, at the round table, not shouting at each other but giving recommendations. This is what the government should be doing, getting out and listening to Canadians. However, the government is not doing it so we in the opposition party will do it.

In my riding I have constituents representing both the Somali and the Bosnian communities. They are going to ask me if the Government of Canada is willing to act in the same consistent manner in each region.

At this time I am not sure that anyone can provide that answer, but I caution the government and the Secretary of State for External Affairs that we must at least have a game plan over the long term, lest we be forced to follow the whims of super powers and then suffer the consequences.

Last Saturday I attended the annual Christmas festival put on by the Parkdale Intercultural Council. The Parkdale Intercultural Council tries to invite Canadians who are newer arrivals to Canada. In addition to the Ukrainian performers and participants we had Somalis, Vietnamese, El Salvadorans, and people from Zaire and Thailand.

I looked up the national anthems of all these countries and they all had something in common. All the people of those countries wanted peace. It was so striking to me that at this time, the Christmas season, all the national anthems call for peace and development.

I hope through Resolution 794 that we will have peace not only in Somalia but in Bosnia-Herzegovina and all around the world.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I will be dividing my time with my colleague from Saskatoon—Humboldt and we will each be taking approximately 10 minutes.

I rise to speak on behalf of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party in making it clear that while we support the resolution which is before the House and support the amendment which has been proposed by my colleague from Winnipeg South Centre, we do have very grave concerns about the process which has led us to this debate.

Last week we in the New Democratic Party called on the government to recognize that before a decision committing Canadian troops to a very dangerous new mission involving the real threat to life was undertaken that Parliament should be consulted. There should have been an opportunity for Parliament to have input before that decision was announced.

Instead what we saw was the minister announcing the decision and now today suggesting that Parliament is in a position to debate a decision which has already been made.

This represents a fundamental contempt not only for this Parliament and members of this House but, as well, for the Canadian people who surely should be consulted through this House before a decision this fundamental has been made.

The member for Rosedale has pointed out rightly that Canadian lives are at risk. Nine hundred members of the Canadian Airborne Regiment will be in Somalia in the very near future. However, the minister suggested that in response to a question from my leader earlier today that governments have to make decisions.

I very much regret that in this particular instance the government has chosen to ignore the important principle of consulting with Parliament before this decision was made.

Having said that, I want to make it clear that we do support the proposed deployment of Canadian forces to Somalia in accordance with the provisions of Security Council Resolution 794. It should be very clearly understood that very dedicated members of the international