

Government Orders

existing policy. I hope the hon. member will make his interventions on behalf of his constituents again at that time.

I would also recommend to the member that tomorrow there will be another debate. It will be on whether or not we should continue with the cruise missile testing. That would be another excellent forum for the hon. member to raise this.

That is why I think we have come to the stage in the development of our country and the development of our foreign policy to take an in depth look and review by consulting Canadians.

• (1315)

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, it is both an honour and a privilege to rise today and to acknowledge your election as Speaker of the House. I am sure that it will always be an encouragement to you to know that your peers gave you a mandate to provide both guidance and prudence to this House as we work through the days and decisions which lie ahead of us.

I also salute each of my colleagues, the men and women elected to this 35th Parliament. I am like them. I have been elected to serve my constituents of Calgary Southeast in this House of the people and trust that our collective wisdom will serve them well.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Québec—Est said that he was the last one from his caucus to rise and address this House. I feel the same way. This has enabled me to gain experience and I must say that today's debate is extremely important and requires that each of us gives it the necessary attention.

[English]

I want that thought to be known to my constituents of Calgary Southeast. I am sure that everyone within my riding will have an opinion on the war in Bosnia. Their concern will come from a desire to see lasting peace and greater tolerance and charity for others. I believe they collectively reflect the views of most Canadians.

We talk of Bosnia in an abstract sense but to bring it closer to my home, the fighting encompasses an area of 178,000 square kilometres. This area is like a block of land that extends from just north of Edmonton to just south of Calgary. There are more displaced people in this area of fighting than the entire populations of Edmonton and Calgary combined, more than 1.6 million people. Such a staggering figure should make it abundantly clear that we cannot sit idly by in a state of indecision as the fighting continues, as more families are torn asunder, as more children are killed and orphaned, as more people come to believe and accept hatred and intolerance as a way of life.

My own concern arises from an intensely personal perspective. That is what I am bringing here today, because I am of Croatian heritage. My mother was born in a small village just outside of Zagreb. I have several family members still living there. They are quite elderly and they have no desire to leave their homes. They are quite typical of those who remain there.

Of the men and women there, the women and children have all been evacuated. The men, the husbands and fathers, are the ones who are caught up in the machinery of war. Life in that village is not like what you or I could ever imagine.

It is difficult to believe that members of my family who live within hearing distance of those bombs dropping—and that is about 10 kilometres—can say: "The war is not too near and life is managed as best we can".

I mentioned earlier that we see ourselves as a nation seeking peaceful solutions and demonstrating tolerance and charity to others. I believe we are now struggling with how these inherent characteristics of our nationhood will help us to develop our response to a particularly brutal and unforgiving war. Having said that, as I thought about what I would say here as I stood before you today, there were three questions that kept coming to my mind which I believe have to be answered in any response that we offer.

First of all, are the people in this war dedicated to destroying each other? Second, will an intervention bring any lasting peace? The third question I asked: are we prepared as a country to watch Canadian soldiers die in this war without apparent end?

In response to the first question: are the people involved in this war dedicated to destroying each other? It appears that the answer is yes. While diplomatic efforts to end the war go on fruitlessly, the killing continues unabated. Life has been reduced to a primitive state with no electricity and no running water. People who were neighbours and friends became bitter enemies overnight. Serbs are killing Bosnian Muslims and Croats. Croats are killing Muslims and sometimes Serbs. Muslims are killing their attackers. I cannot imagine how anyone living in the midst of this carnage can remain objective.

• (1320)

Second, will an intervention bring any lasting peace? There is a fundamental tension to the focus of our debate because of our legal and moral obligations toward intervention in the region. Are we going to intervene? Also, what costs are we willing to accept if we do intervene without making a simultaneous effort to bring the conflict to an end? Do we want to see Canadian soldiers die as they bring humanitarian aid to the region?

Canada as a signatory of the United Nations universal declaration of human rights has always taken a leading role in international responsibilities. Canadians are deservedly very proud of this. We fulfil our international obligations in many important ways.