

Government Orders

Another consequence, and one that we must not forget is the fact that Canadians, particularly those of Iraqi and Arab origin, are already facing a sense of insecurity. We must ask what is the role of CSIS and other government agencies in contributing to this atmosphere of insecurity. We must not repeat the tragic mistakes that we made during and after World War II with Japanese Canadians, Italian Canadians, Ukrainian Canadians, and others.

I believe that it would be profoundly wrong for Canada to participate in this war. I believe deeply that surely to God we in the latter part of the 20th century must have a better way of resolving conflicts between nations and resorting to war.

Therefore I feel that Canada in the event of an armed conflict should not be drawn into that war. We are there to support sanctions. We are there in that important role. I want to pay tribute to the men and women in the Armed Forces who have done that and done that well. That is not the issue.

The fact is that if the region is plunged into a war that embargo would then become a blockade and, in international law, an act of war. Surely, in the event that there is an armed attack, Canada's role should be one of peace-keeping, a humanitarian role. There is a variety of ways we can achieve that.

• (1850)

If there is to be war in the world, in Canada at this time, let it not be a war with catastrophic consequences, not just for the Middle East but for the entire globe. Let it be a war on poverty, on homelessness, on environmental destruction, on AIDS, on racism, and on sexism. Let it be a war on the obscenity of over a billion children on this planet living in poverty. Let that be the war that we collectively wage on behalf of the people of this planet.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Robinson: In closing, let me be very clear. We support the United Nations. We have always supported a strong and effective United Nations.

[*Translation*]

Ever since it was founded and even before, the New Democratic Party has always endorsed the principles of the United Nations. But, the best way to endorse the principles of the United Nations charter is of course to advocate a peaceful settlement, not war.

[*English*]

I want to close on a personal note. I had hoped that arising from this conflict, and from the end of the cold war, there might be a new vision, and a new role for the United Nations.

The last time that the United States was involved in a war was the war in Vietnam. It took a toll of over 55,000 lives and tens of thousands more scarred, injured. For what?

My family we lived in the United States during that war. My mother and father left the United States at great personal cost because they did not want to support an immoral war. They did not want their son to be drafted to fight in that immoral war. I fervently hope that Canada, 25 years later, will not plunge into another equally or even more destructive war. As Canadians across this country have pleaded with this government, let us give peace a chance.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the critic from the New Democratic Party on that emotional and very clear presentation of the position of his party. He reinforced something that the Leader of the Liberal Party said in his speech, that our troops are there now to enforce the embargo, to enforce the sanctions. "But once war is declared that embargo becomes a blockade", said our leader, and when he said that some members on the government side laughed.

I am wondering if the critic from the New Democratic Party whose profession is law, I would indicate on what basis he makes that definition of an embargo becoming a blockade and once it becomes a blockade our troops being in a state of war. Can he clarify to the House where he gets this definition of an embargo becoming a blockade and so on? I think this might educate some of the members on the other side.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, I want to emphasize first that this debate is not about legal niceties. This debate is about the role that Canada might be playing in a situation of war.

On the precise question, the issue raised by my colleague, we can look at any text on international law—whether it be Dacey or any other text of international law—and in the event of armed conflict breaking out, an embargo becomes in law a blockade and a blockade in international law is construed as an act of war.