

*Special Debate*

Two weeks ago the Minister of Foreign Affairs appeared before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. At that point, the minister wanted to know the positions of the official opposition and of the Reform Party. I will come back to that.

Although I am pleased we are having the debate, I was truly shocked and disappointed by the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition when he opened his remarks by stating that he cannot be proud of what Canada has done or has not done. We on this side are very proud of what Canada has done in this conflict and we continue to be proud and supportive of these people.

He went on to blame Canada further. He said that Canada had not done anything. Does the Leader of the Opposition not realize that we are one of a team and we cannot act unilaterally? I guess the team approach to things is not in the leader's vocabulary.

Does he not realize that presently there are about 35 countries with 43,000 troops involved here? If it was not for all the negotiations that have been going on over all these years and all the troops and countries participating, who knows if we would not be in the middle of world war three today?

Yes, lives have been lost. Yes, it is expensive. However, thank God that countries like Canada are participating because we may have warded off another world war.

The Leader of the Opposition went on to complain that all we were debating the rotation and that the rotation has been decided. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to read what it is we are debating. It states:

That this House, in light of the UN Security Council consideration of renewed mandates for UN forces in the former Yugoslavia—

That is what we are debating. We are debating whether Canada should continue to keep its forces there or not. The rotation comes automatically. After the troops have been there six months they are replaced. However, if after a month Canada decides to pull out its troops, it pulls out fresh and strong troops, not tired troops.

It is the mandate we are debating. The rotation is automatic after six months. I was disappointed that the hon. member could not distinguish between that.

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He went on to say that we have no choice. I thought he was going to say that we have no choice whether to stay or pull out. We do have a choice. That is why we are having this debate.

The Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of National Defence said that before making an important decision like this one, whether or not to renew the mandate, Parliament would be consulted. That is what we are doing. To

stand and say that we have no choice does not help the government. We are looking for some leadership from the opposition to help Canadians make an important decision.

The Leader of the Opposition went on to say: "What is Canada's policy in peacekeeping missions?" I suggest he read a bit of history. By going back to when the Prime Minister of Canada, Lester B. Pearson, recommended the peacekeeping forces. That role continues. We are changing that role. We are looking more at preventive measures, but the peacekeeping role continues. That is why Canada holds such an enviable position around the world.

The Leader of the Opposition does not seem to realize that conflicts since the end of the cold war are much different. In those days, one state attacked another state. Peace was made and we sent peacekeepers to keep the peace. Now it is internal conflicts. It is ethnocultural conflicts. It is tribal conflicts, wars, killings and genocide within a country. That is a totally different kind of challenge.

I was pleased that the Leader of the Opposition ended by saying: "Yes, we should renew the mandate". However he puts certain conditions on it. I guess it was a conditional yes. To be honest his remarks did not help the government very much to decide whether we should continue our mandate and keep our peacekeepers there or not.

The official spokesperson for the Reform Party complained that we had no consultations. We have had consultations through the whole foreign policy review. The government responds. The foreign affairs standing committee had the Minister of Foreign Affairs before it just two weeks ago. We discussed the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict. The minister asked point blank the members of the official opposition what was their position. The answer was similar to what we got tonight.

When the minister asked the Reform Party, what the position was, the response was that they are split 50:50 on the issue. I was pleased that today the Reform Party made it clear that its position is to withdraw our forces. At least we know what the stand is, the position of the Reform Party.

To answer the Leader of the Opposition, I want to remind him that Canada remains one of the strongest advocates of reinforcing UN's conflict prevention and conflict resolution capability. We have been working with like-minded countries at the UN to bring about reforms that will provide the organization with the political, financial and military tools it needs to fulfil its growing responsibilities.

Canada is conducting a study on a UN rapid reaction capability and will host an international conference on the subject next week. We are organizing with our partners peacekeeping semi-