

*Government Orders*

As Minister of Justice, I wanted to clarify some of the underlying legal principles which guide us and I took the opportunity to talk about some of the other aspects as well.

This is a very important debate. It does not rewrite the Constitution, but it is part of the very important constitutional principle of responsible government whereby government exercises its prerogatives but in consultation with, accountable to, and answerable to Parliament.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice may have inadvertently given away the secret, if you like, of the reality that the government is asking us to accept. In citing the consensus out of which the government is operating, she referred finally, not only or specifically, to the United Nations, but to the western industrialized world, and the conclusions that world has drawn about what should be done in the Middle East with respect to the Iraqi invasion and annexation of Kuwait which we all condemn but on which we are going to disagree with each other tonight about how we deal with that invasion and annexation.

I say that I hope that in my comments this evening that I might in some way or another faithfully reflect what I believe to be the legitimate ambiguity and agonizing that Canadians of all walks of life have been going through, particularly in the last week as they saw January 15 approaching. This is a feeling I think that can best be described as having that sense of responsibility that Canadians have toward the world community and toward the maintenance of international law and order, having that sense of responsibility called upon by the government, feeling the tug of that training and of that ethic which is a good ethic, but nevertheless feeling that somehow they are being led down the garden path, that somehow their principles are being exploited, that they are being taken advantage of, and that their beliefs are being applied in a context which does not really deserve the full application of that responsibility.

I want to begin with some of the things that the Secretary of State for External Affairs said because I had something to do with the Secretary of State for External

Affairs when I was the external affairs critic for my party in the summer when the Iraqi invasion first occurred.

• (2110)

The speech of the minister was at times a very eloquent appeal for unity. At other times, it descended into what I would regard as partisan politics and caricaturing of opposing arguments. But I ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs, if he was interested in building a Canadian consensus about how Canada ought to respond to this particular event, why he did not do that on August 2. Why did Canadians, and particularly Canadian members of Parliament, have to hear about the decision to send Canadian ships to the gulf from the Secretary of State for External Affairs coming out of a NATO foreign ministers' meeting?

Why could that decision not have been made, if indeed that was the decision to be made, after consultation with Canadian members of Parliament, with the Canadian external affairs committee, with his counterparts in the House of Commons, or with anybody here in Canada who had a political responsibility? That did not happen.

I met with the Secretary of State for External Affairs early that week after the invasion and had a fairly long conversation with him. I had no inkling. No impression was given whatsoever, in fact quite the contrary, that Canada by the end of the week would be sending ships to the gulf.

I say to the Secretary of State for External Affairs that to come to us now and ask us for uncritical support at the conclusion of a process that time and time again he bungled by not taking Canadian parliamentarians seriously is the height of nerve. It is the height of nerve also when the fact is considered that time after time Parliament was asked to approve things after the fact, somewhat in the way the UN was constantly asked to approve things after decisions had already been taken in Washington or in Ottawa.

The Minister of Justice referred to the need to deter an invasion of Saudi Arabia. That was happening in the context of the bilateral relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Announcing in August that Canadian ships would be sent to the gulf and be there by