

*Private Members' Business*

1956 Suez crisis, while humanitarian efforts have become much more important in recent years.

The rise in ethnic conflicts since the tensions between East and West have disappeared have turned peacekeeping missions into dangerous operations in which peacekeepers are caught in the middle of heavy fighting. Of course, the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the end of the cold war have given us an opportunity to contribute to the advancement of democracy and human rights. But this should not be done blindly.

Unfortunately, the new complexity of peacekeeping mandates did not go hand in hand with public acceptance. The Canadian Forces' traditional role on the international stage has always been to support peacekeeping missions by contributing troops. However, the time for unconditional participation in every UN operation may be over.

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As some say, Canada is not the 9-1-1 of the planet. It is our view, in the Bloc Quebecois, that Canada should make any future commitment subject to more definite conditions. It is also our view that the Canadian Armed Forces should be configured around a clearly defined role. The credibility of our actions depends on it.

In addition, we think that Canada should have a comprehensive review of its involvement in international security and peacekeeping. It should therefore review its contribution to existing military alliances, such as NATO and NORAD, as well as promote within these organizations a broadening of their role and mandate according to the needs of the UN.

While reviewing its contribution to global peace and security, Canada should support the setting up of a standby contingent that could be deployed with UN peacekeeping forces abroad. These organizations need to see their skills updated both with respect to preserving security and resolving conflicts.

The problem is that the Canadian government has no peacekeeping policy. As the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition asked last March, on what basis do we agree to take part in peacekeeping missions? No one can answer.

The Bloc Quebecois refuses to give the defence minister a free hand and allow troops from Quebec and Canada to continue to be sent on missions which are frustrating because there is no clear and definite mandate, and in which they are totally powerless to do anything about the horrors suffered by civilian populations.

Today, at a time when peacekeeping missions are becoming increasingly complex and their costs astronomical, while more and more lives are lost, clear conditions of participation are essential. The Bloc Quebecois hopes that the government will

undertake to set out the conditions under which our troops will participate and their mandate can be renewed.

It is essential that conditions be harmonized with the UN. UN missions are hard, particularly psychologically, because their purpose is not clear. The government and the Minister of National Defence should provide more information to this House, they should encourage a debate on the issue, so that we can work together to find a solution to the impasse in which Canadian troops find themselves.

This is why the Bloc Quebecois supports this bill. It is essential that Parliament be informed of Canadian military activities abroad. As you know, the Bloc said on a number of occasions that Canadian participation in peacekeeping missions ought to be voted on in the House of Commons, following a short debate, time permitting.

However, the Bloc Quebecois feels that Bill C-295 goes way too far in terms of parliamentary control and is much too rigid. Clause 4 does not include any provision dealing with the situation where Canadian troops might have to get involved in peacekeeping operations at a time when Parliament is not sitting, such as in the summer for example.

Consequently, the legislation proposed by the Reform Party precludes the government from taking quick action in case of a crisis. There must be a happy medium between the position of the Reform Party and that of the Liberal government, which tries to restrict the role of parliamentarians to making speeches which carry no weight.

We also have some reservations about the role of the UN in defining peacekeeping operations. Clause 4 of Bill C-295 provides that a motion must be debated in the House of Commons to authorize the participation of Canadians in a peacekeeping mission, to specify the objectives and role of the mission, to define the state or the area in which the mission is to operate, to specify the date on which the authority is to expire, and to specify a maximum planned expenditure for the mission.

I remind Reform members that the mandate, the objectives, the area and the duration of each UN mission would not be an issue if a permanent peacekeeping force were established, since the parameters would be defined by the United Nations.

The problem exists today because the government sends, more or less automatically and without giving it much consideration, Canadian troops to every UN peacekeeping mission. So, the lack of parameters regarding the mandate of Canadian troops participating in peacekeeping missions clearly illustrates this problem, since the Canadian government seems unable to define the mandate and the objectives of Canadian participation in peacekeeping missions. Obviously, Parliament should look after that issue.