

Government Orders

Yes, it is a very serious situation over there. We do not know from hour to hour what might be happening. I would just like to see us concentrating on our faith, hope and prayers for these young men and women. We are all so proud of them, especially in our own particular case, this John van Nostrand, a fifth generation young man from the village of Vandorf where I live.

I want to stay on a high note of pride for these young men and women. Let us get this partisan politics out of the discussion.

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to commend my hon. friend. I believe that his concern for the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces is genuine. I wish to assure him that I think all members of the House share the same concern.

But, Mr. Speaker, to get up and say let us not talk about how this government screwed up and how it handled the situation is a bit too much for me to handle. For the member to get up and tell me that what we should really be doing is forgetting the events that transpired during the summer months is a bit too much for me to handle.

There is nobody who is more concerned in this House for the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces than I am, Perhaps my hon. colleague over there is a close second. I for one am not going to forget what this Prime Minister and this government have done and the slap in the face they have given the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces who are doing their jobs over there. We wanted to do our jobs in this place, but the Prime Minister did not allow us to do that.

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, since my comment is to the hon. member, I will use his language.

I thank him for his remarkable exposé that he just made. He may feel that he is a new member here but he has already shown an extraordinary—and I do not want to be pompous— sensitivity and a comprehension of a very important debate. He knows this has been quite a day for me. To say that, I mean it totally and absolutely. I want to thank him for that unbelievable understanding of the meaning of what we are all about to do.

It is no secret. He knows that I disagree with the government motion. It is no secret and I will say that in my speech if I have a chance to make it. I disagree with

having sent soldiers. That is another matter. At least he has shown in his own speech that he understands.

I have a question I would like to ask him about his motion. He knows that I am very concerned and my colleagues know it. At least if they didn't, they know it since this morning. He referred to a special committee, and I agree with that. I would like to ask him what he means by travel to the Middle East region to consult with members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

By the Middle East region does he mean just where Canadians are or, in order to have a better understanding of the entire picture, that the time has come for colleagues not to go where Canadians may be attacked soon but to have a feeling and a better understanding of what I have been trying to convey to this House ever since I arrived here, especially since 1970, with all due respect to all my colleagues? Can my hon. colleague who made that speech please help me out in understanding his resolution?

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to. I have introduced this motion twice. I think it is incredibly important at this point in time where we could be facing a major confrontation in the Middle East that parliamentarians have a first-hand observation so that they can come back to this place and have a better and fuller debate, not just based on what is happening on CNN news in the evening.

If we are now getting into a situation where we could be potentially sending tens of thousands of Canadian men and women in the Armed Forces to fight in a war that could happen if diplomatic efforts fail, I think it is very important that members of this House make every effort to apprise themselves on a first-hand basis of all of the political happenings that are now taking place in the Middle East. Anybody that is watching this situation develop knows that it is not just a problem between two states. It is a problem involving a number of states which is extremely fluid, and it is changing on an hourly or daily basis.

· My primary concern is that we go and find out exactly what conditions our men and women are operating under currently, so that we can come back to this place and do not have to listen to third-hand departmental reports given out in the House here as to how the Canadian vessels or the Sea King helicopters are standing up. We could also look at the broader political situation that is evolving so that when we make a decision, if God forbid we ever have to make a decision and if the escalation continues, we will make a decision