

Oral Questions

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to the minister that the duty is not mine. The duty is the United Nations'.

The government has talked about defending the charter. Under Article 42 of the Charter of the United Nations no military action can be initiated until the Security Council has decided on the adequacy or inadequacy of sanctions. The Security Council has not made that decision.

How can the minister and the Prime Minister send Canada to war when a fundamental principle and fundamental requirement of the charter has not yet been met? You are denying the Charter of the United Nations.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, if Canada is denying the Charter of the United Nations, so, too, is Javier Perez de Cuellar; so, too, is the Government of France; so, too, is the Government of the United Kingdom; so, too, are all the members—permanent and those with two-year terms—of the Security Council; and so, too, are other countries which recognize, as the Prime Minister said so eloquently this morning, that the initial purpose of the United Nations when it was established by Mr. Pearson, among others, was to provide the capacity to talk as long as talk would work. But then, under the charter, when it became clear that talk would not persuade—

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Article 42 under the charter is being evaded—which is to obey the charter, not evade it.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): —it was in the interests of world order for force to be deployed. That is the charter. It has been decades since we have been able to realize the effectiveness to accomplish what Lester Pearson dreamed of.

We are now in a situation where it is possible for us to have the full authority of the United Nations Charter, the authority to talk and the authority to act.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. When the Prime Minister came to power, he said that he would change the face of Canada. Indeed, his government has done a lot to make this happen, but surely nothing equals

what has been done in the past to the decision of the Prime Minister and his government today that Canada will support offensive action in the Middle East. The lives of hundreds of people are at stake.

We talked earlier this morning about sanctions and whether or not they are working, and what the options are. I think we have had the positions clearly on the table this morning. We know the Prime Minister's and the government's position. The New Democratic Party has clearly put out our position in opposition to Canada going to war.

I presume the Prime Minister has made his decision to involve Canada in a war based on information that sanctions and other diplomatic measures have not worked.

Therefore, will the Prime Minister support the New Democratic Party's proposition that immediately after Question Period the House go into a committee of the whole where we have an opportunity to hear witnesses—academics, military people, and government people—so that we can have a real debate and so that that will be available for Canadians who are watching closely what action we take in the House?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

• (1430)

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, raises a question that her House leader raised this morning at about 11.15 and was put to the House Leader of the Government. My understanding is that the Leader of the Government in the House proposed that this matter be considered by House leaders later on this afternoon. He will no doubt report back to me, and I will be happy to discuss it with my hon. friend.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Prime Minister for his remarks. I hope that he gives his vote to support because I believe this is what we need so that all Canadians who are watching these proceedings have full information.

We are now at January 15, a date which has been set for the consideration of war, but many countries continue with peace proposals. Britain has made some, as has France and some of the Arab countries. There are initiatives being pursued even at this late date.