

*Government Orders*

The intentions of everyone here are good. We have to take those intentions and drive them with energy through the United Nations to another alternative other than war.

**Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North):** Madam Speaker, the understandable tendency in such an important discussion as we are having today is to seek guidance from precedents, from earlier events in our history or in international relations which may in some way help to guide us.

We have had today a number of speakers draw attention to the traditions of Canada in peacekeeping, but others have reached back prior to those post-war years and looked to the inter-war years. The Prime Minister in particular and to a degree the Secretary of State for External Affairs. They argued that support for the United Nations by supporting military action today was in contrast to the ineffectiveness of the League of Nations in the 1930s. The need at that time for military action in their view evaded.

I want to say just one word about that before we turn to more recent events. The fact is that in the 1930s the ineffectiveness of the League of Nations was not simply because the member states of the League of Nations were unwilling to engage in military action against dictatorships intent upon expanding beyond their own borders, but rather because of two factors. The first, of course, is fundamental. The United States was not a member of the League of Nations. The League of Nations in that sense was not universal. That is not the situation today with the United Nations.

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The United Nations embodies almost all the nations of the world. The League of Nations was fundamentally flawed and rendered largely ineffective by the absence of the United States resulting from a decision of the United States Senate.

The second argument that the government advanced in its historical parallels was that somehow the unwillingness of the League of Nations to engage in military action rendered it ineffective. It was not in fact an unwillingness to engage in military action which rendered the League of Nations ineffective.

It was not only the absence of the United States from the League, but the unwillingness to give economic sanctions a real chance against the aggression of Italy and Abyssinia, the unwillingness of the British to use the Royal Navy to prevent Italian shipping to reach Abyssinia, and the unwillingness in effect of the League to give economic sanctions a chance. That, should be the parallel drawn today.

It was not an unwillingness on the part of the members of the League to use military force but rather the failure to give economic sanctions the chance they needed to be effective.

The fact is that all of us on each side of this House would agree that the regime in Iraq is a regime that none of us would find attractive or appealing in any way, but that is not our decision. That is not our judgment. The sole judgment is that Iraq has seized the territory of another member state of the United Nations.

It is that question that we are addressing, and it is that question that raises the debate today. Why is Canada on the edge of war? Why is Canada on the edge of declaring itself engaged in war in the Middle East? Certainly, we have not heard the government advance the argument that it is to ensure that international oil prices remain low. It is not to bring about a longer term settlement in the Middle East, however desirable that may be.

The government suggests that it has only one purpose in engaging Canadian forces in the Middle East; that is, to support collective security. It bases its whole argument and rationale for the engagement of Canadian forces on the idea that if Canada and other like minded nations do not provide forces to participate in military action in the gulf, the United Nations will somehow collapse, fail and be rendered impotent.

Let us spend a few minutes on that proposition, because I think it is really the central proposition. In advancing that argument, in the historical sense of saying that if the member nations of the United Nations do not join together in military action, it will mean the collapse of collective security and the negation of everything that Canada, since 1945, has worked for in the United Nations. It will mean the rejection of Canadian goals in Canada's own seeking of that security in collective action.

If that is what the government's argument is based on, then the government perhaps understandably tries to polarize the argument. It says: "Either we engage in