

Government Orders

decade I know his objectives. I have been raised and lived with them, but I do not support them.

I think there comes a time for law and order. There comes a time to protect human rights. There comes a time when we need to unite as a force strong enough to repel the aggressors, the dictators, the people who want to rule the world.

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, at the outset of my remarks I want to mention a couple of facts on which there is agreement.

No one in the House on either side of the House wants war. No Conservative, no Liberal, no New Democrat. None of us in the House want war. We all agree on that.

We also agree that Saddam Hussein is a brutal dictator and he must leave Kuwait. We all agree on that.

We also agree now that the government has made the decision to join the hostilities to enter into the war, all of us—to the last man and woman in this House—support our troops. We support our troops and I challenge anyone in the House to say that I and particularly my fellow Liberals do not support our troops. We do.

I found it a little disconcerting when I heard earlier today a member from the government benches express concern about division in the House because it might be construed, particularly by our military, as a lack of support. Let me make it absolutely clear that I have far more faith in our soldiers than that kind of remark indicates.

I know in my mind that Canadian soldiers understand very well what Parliament is about and what the House of Commons is about. This is a place to debate issues, to deal with our differences, and to propose alternatives. This is what the House is about.

When it comes to a major issue, an issue that commits this country to war, an issue that commits our troops to a conflict where their lives are at risk, of course there are going to be questions and of course there are going to be disagreements. But that in no way casts any doubt on the ability of our soldiers, and casts no doubt whatsoever on the support that we give our soldiers, sailors, and airmen as well. Everyone in our military deserves full support, and they have our support.

• (1900)

Let us get to the matters where there is disagreement. First of all, international forces comprised of approximately 30 countries have decided to wage war. They have decided that sanctions were not working. They decided that the only way to get rid of Saddam Hussein, to get his troops out of Kuwait, was to wage war. That is where we Liberals disagree.

We disagree that this is the time to wage war, because there is nothing more horrible than the decision to wage war. War is murder. War is mass slaughter. It is carnage on the grandest scale. It is the method of settling disagreements. It is the method of last resort. In our conscience and in our hearts, we firmly believe the time has not come to wage war. It is as simple as that.

We looked at the results of sanctions and came to the conclusion that the sanctions, the embargo, had not brought Saddam Hussein down; he was still in Kuwait. We saw a strong indication that sanctions were working. They were warranted to continue and they should have been given more time. That is our position. That position is held firmly.

War, as one of the earlier speakers said today, is an indication or example of defeat and failure. War does not have a good track record. We know that there have been times in history—the Second World War is a good example—when there was no alternative. I suppose it was the best of a bad lot. But anybody who is a student of history, even a student of the rudiments of history, will understand that war is horrible and a failure. We should learn something by looking at history. We should learn, if nothing else, to search for something better than war.

We on this side, in a heart-felt opinion, feel that the use of sanctions in this particular case was an alternative and that sanctions deserved a good try. We should have exercised patience. That is why we disagree. It has nothing to do with canards that come sailing from that side of the House about possible lack of support for the United Nations. We support the United Nations to the hilt. I challenge anyone from the government side to say otherwise and to prove otherwise.

There is a second area of disagreement. I respect the government. It is a judgment call. I am quite sure that members of the cabinet had difficulty reaching the decision. The decision was to commit our troops and nation to war against Iraq, to enter into hostilities. That is the responsibility of the government, and the government has exercised that responsibility. We respectfully—and I underline the word respectfully—disagree with the