

If we go to war now, Mr. Speaker, we will be haunted by each and every casualty. We will wonder if we had tried to wait for other options and if we had taken a pro-active approach to peace and not a reactive approach to war if that would have made a real difference.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Ms. McLaughlin: In concluding, I would like to make a suggestion. This dreadful war will cost us far too much. Worse, a victory will be no guarantee of peace in this part of the world. The defeat of Saddam Hussein in Iraq may make it even harder to achieve our objective: peace and security in the Middle East.

Look at the area, Mr. Speaker. There is no guarantee that the leader who would replace Saddam Hussein would be an improvement. If Iraq is destroyed, Iran may very well rise again as the dominant power in the region. If Iraq is destroyed, Turkey, Syria and Iran may decide to fight to control what is left of Iraq.

The Arab governments that decided to support the war will face the fury of their citizens. A holy war is a real possibility. Compare this scenario with the option of not going to war at all. If we wait, the worst that can happen by a year from now is that Iraq would continue to occupy Kuwait. I leave it to the House to decide which option is the riskiest and to choose accordingly.

[*English*]

The Prime Minister made the comparison to the League of Nations and also to the UN Charter which says that we are committed to working for effective and collective action. This debate is about not who is right but our version of what is effective collective action. The Prime Minister has said that doctrinaire insistence on peace is what led to the end of the League of Nations and to undermining the credibility of the League of Nations.

• (1310)

It is commonly argued that this crisis represents the first major post-cold war test for the United Nations, and I agree. The Secretary of State for External Affairs said that the crisis is about the future of the United Nations, and I agree. This is why we cannot allow the United Nations to endorse a move into war when all peaceful means have not been exhausted.

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Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. McLaughlin: I would like to explain that further, Mr. Speaker, because I think it is an extremely important point about the choices that are before the international community today.

Surely success would not be measured by the ability to use the United Nations to legitimize war. It should be measured by the ability of the United Nations to prevent war.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. McLaughlin: Mr. Speaker, there has been much talk of a new and just world order. I am sure it is an objective that all of us in this Chamber share. But the rush to war will simply represent the same old response the same old way. If we do what we have always done and declare war without looking at all of the options, we will make the same mistakes of the past. But we will have done it under the United Nations. This is not hope for a new world order. A new world order looks at new solutions, new ways and effective co-ordinated international efforts that try everything to avoid war, to have patience and give time, to exercise every option, if that is what it takes.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. McLaughlin: The NDP is a party that has always supported the United Nations efforts, that has supported international co-operative action in international conflicts. If we cannot look back in one year or six months and say that the Security Council of the United Nations could not find a new way to settle disputes, we will not have found a new world order. We will simply be perpetuating the madness of the old world order.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. McLaughlin: We are not debating today whether Saddam Hussein is taking evil action. He is. But to punish that evil and immoral action with tens of thousands of further mortalities does not make sense. It does not in any way diminish our sympathy, our sadness, and our outrage at what Saddam Hussein has done in Kuwait and what has been identified by Amnesty International.

War is not the answer today. War is not the solution. Canada has a role to support the United Nations charter, to seek effective collective action, and to participate in that. Canada has an important active role and not a reactive role.