

Government Orders

Today, our House of Commons will be meeting to debate Canada's response to the latest turn of events. I ask all Members of Parliament to examine very carefully their position

In light of the dubious validity of Resolution 678, Canada should confine itself to continuing sanctions enforcement at sea and in the air, to providing emergency humanitarian assistance to the refugees inevitably created by the commencement of hostilities and to the provision of a field hospital, as recently requested by the United Kingdom.

Let Canada join with others in continuing the search for diplomatic solutions.

• (1820)

He concludes:

War is not necessary. Ask yourself, what will have been gained if literally tens of thousands of lives are lost in order to remove Iraq from Kuwait? Will the price be seen as worthwhile, if we can not be certain that the same objective could have been achieved without the loss of any lives?

Perhaps the time has come for a pause of good sense, for all our sakes.

That is the position of the United Nations Association in Canada and indeed, the position of this party. The government is not proposing to send us to war as part of a UN force. My colleague from Bonavista—Trinity—Conception has made that point repeatedly in the House of Commons.

We have, as Canadians, fought under the UN flag before. We have fought under the NATO flag before. But this is not a NATO flag. This is not a UN flag. The time now is not the same as we have seen in the past. We believe that sanctions have not had time to work. There was an article in *The New York Times* as recently as two days ago which said that sanctions will bite, and soon, and referred to evidence presented to the President of the United States by the CIA recently.

We believe that sanctions can work given time and that they should be given that time to work. We support those sanctions and have from the beginning. We have supported the presence of the Canadian forces in the Gulf. As one of those who has visited the Canadian forces, I want to say that we are proud on this side of the competence and the professionalism that the Canadian forces are showing in the gulf. Three per cent of the ships are ours, are Canadian ships, and yet we are doing 25 per cent of the interceptions.

We believe this is the course of action that we should continue and that the Canadian forces should not be put on a different footing at this time, that war is not inevitable. The position of this party is not that there

should be peace at any cost, but that at this time it is not necessary to commit this country to war.

Indeed, the Government of Canada has not made the case for Canada going to war, not made the case that it is in Canada's best interest to go to war at this time. That appears also to be the public opinion in this country. We have seen a Gallup poll within the past day or so that shows that 56 per cent of Canadians believe that war is wrong for Canada at this time. Those figures change across the country. They are very strong in my part of the country and they are very strong in the province of Quebec. But 56 per cent of all Canadians feel that now is not the time for Canada to go to war.

I suspect that one of the reasons they feel this way is that they feel that historically the role of this country has been peacekeeper and not war-maker, and that inevitably when the conflict, if it should come, is over then there will be a need for peacekeeping and Canada will have a role to play. Canada will undoubtedly have lost a great deal of the credibility that we have had in the past and therefore we will have diminished our capability of playing the role of peacekeeper.

The position of this party is clear. We believe that war is an option always and we cannot rule out forever the option of war. But we believe this is not the time for this country to commit itself and its forces to war. We believe there is another course of action. We believe sanctions should be given more time to have their effect and that is the course of action that the government should be following. That is why we oppose this resolution.

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South): Madam Speaker, I was wondering if the member would really categorize Canada's contribution as warlike.

We have three ships in the gulf patrolling to make sure that an embargo is enforced. We have 24 airplanes that will be patrolling air space over the gulf itself, according to the Minister of National Defence, to make sure that the military assets of the alliance are not attacked. We are possibly going to have a hospital there of which the hon. member approves.

Where is the warlike action by Canada that the member does not approve of? Where is the warlike activity that Canada is undertaking? Does the member not agree that as a peacekeeping group we ought to enforce an embargo, that we ought to make sure that those who are enforcing the embargo are protected from the air and that those who may be involved in hostilities are looked after in hospitals and protected with respect to their health and their physical being?