

Oral Questions

ty Council resolutions, then naturally I will look very carefully at that.

The House would want to know that today fully 97 per cent of the Canadians who were in Iraq or Kuwait at the time of the invasion of Kuwait are home. Of the 3 per cent who remain, some wish to remain. There are some who are against their will. We want to have them come home.

If the hon. member has a practical suggestion that is consistent with the Canadian support of the Security Council resolution, naturally I will look at it.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. I think it would be very helpful if the Secretary of State for External Affairs would elaborate on the discussions held between the President of the United States and the Prime Minister about the Iraqi situation, particularly if in fact they discussed, as the Leader of the Opposition was mentioning, the potential use of force against Iraq.

Have there been consultations? Have there been those kinds of discussions to determine whether, how, and at what time we might take those actions?

In that case I would go back to the question of hostages and ask the Secretary of State specifically if he would undertake to send a special emissary to Iraq, a noted Canadian who might make that representation, or in particular to send a group of parliamentarians who are not associated with the government but could represent the interests of all Canadians in trying to seek the security and safety of those 59 Canadians still left in those war-torn countries.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think, but I want to confirm, if the hon. member shares my view that any action we take should be consistent with Canadian support of the Security Council resolutions. Does he agree with that?

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Uh-huh.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Yes, and that we should not take any action that would send a false signal to Saddam Hussein who might think that Canadian will was slackening. Does he agree with that?

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Uh-huh.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Yes, he does. Those are the conditions that I have set forward in my answer earlier. If there are proposals by the hon. member or others that will accomplish those goals and respect those conditions, then I am prepared to look at them very seriously.

The member and I had an opportunity in the committee this morning to talk about how my colleagues and I can best keep members of Parliament informed about developments that occur with respect to the situation in the gulf. A question was put to me regarding a particular aspect of a conversation between the Prime Minister and the President. I replied to that.

I intend to be similarly forthcoming on other particular questions that are put to me. As I said earlier today in the standing committee, and I think to the agreement of all members of the House, if some of those matters are matters which are best discussed in some confidentiality, I would request the opportunity to discuss those in confidentiality, but I want to keep the House of Commons fully informed.

Mr. John Brewin (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the House of the statement the Secretary of State for External Affairs made to the committee this morning.

He said that he approved the use of force with or without the approval of the Security Council of the United Nations. That statement, I submit, is a green light to the United States and others to proceed without the approval of the Security Council, which is a position the Canadian government until now has been working to prevent.

Will the Secretary of State for External Affairs explain to the House what steps he is going to take to repair the grievous damage this statement has made to Canada's credibility as a member of the Security Council?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is inevitable that in an exchange like this, either my credibility or that of the hon. member will suffer. We will see whose does.

Because he was present throughout the debate, the hon. member knows that I repeated *à maintes reprises* the position of Canada, that our strong, strong preference is to work through the United Nations and that, indeed, we