

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Defence.

Before the Persian Gulf crisis came along, the minister was sending out signals that substantial cuts could be expected in the numbers of the Canadian forces personnel and other areas of the defence department as a cost saving exercise.

In view of the varied and valued expertise of our forces, does the minister still have plans in place to cut the Canadian forces after the gulf crisis is over?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, as long as this party has the authority and the responsibility of providing security for Canada, we will continue to spend the appropriate amount of taxpayers' dollars to provide that security.

I am not too sure with his present leader whether that would be necessary if his party formed the government.

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the same minister. The government has proposed cuts in the Public Service of Canada to help pay for military operations in the gulf. That is the kind of financial commitment this government has.

How does the government now plan to pay for the Persian Gulf operation in addition to those measures already stated? For example, will the government increase the deficit or is the Minister of Finance opposing that step?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, since the gulf crisis which started with the attack of Iraq on Kuwait on August 2, I have had the total support and commitment of my cabinet colleagues, from the Prime Minister to the Minister of Finance and my caucus.

Oral Questions

• (1450)

I can say to the hon. member that Canada in the past has never made a decision to defend world order and bring about peace and security because of the cost. It has done it because it has been right.

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PERSIAN GULF CRISIS

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The human and environmental consequences of any war are self-evident. Scientific projections of the environmental implications of Iraqi threats to destroy Kuwaiti oilfields if attacked reveal the potential for devastating climate change.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs alluded to environmental warfare. Does the government not recognize that this war is too horrible to contemplate? Why is this government following this insane course?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have just indicated to the House that Saddam Hussein has used the last period of time that was given to him to construct, I said, a trench. In fact it is a pipeline, the purpose of which is to create terrible environmental damage. That is happening now.

If there is a point that I am seeking to have communicated to the people of Canada, it is that the *status quo* we face now is a *status quo* that is full of peril and full of damage.

Ask any Kuwaiti. Ask anyone in Saudi Arabia whose water purification processes would be corrupted irretrievably by the way that Saddam Hussein has used the time.

The choice is not between some kind of peaceful *status quo* and the terrors of war. Of course war is horrible, but so is allowing aggression and so is allowing Saddam Hussein the time to do other terrible things.

What do you think he is doing with his chemical weapons? What do you think he is doing with his biological weapons? He is using that time in ways that the New Democratic Party should not be supporting.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.