

Special Debate

present funds is being called into question by the Auditor General.

My time is limited and I did not want to be wholly negative on this because as I said at the beginning, we do support this action. These people who are going overseas and indeed all Canadians want these questions answered. They want the questions answered as to the future of peacekeeping. What is going to be the policy and will the resources be there for them?

We need a clear statement from the government on our future, not just in peacekeeping, but in peacemaking. We need a clear statement of what the priority is going to be in resource allocations. Canadians support peacekeeping, but they want a firm assurance that the equipment is going to be there.

I want to close by reading from a letter that actually was written to the Minister of Finance by Valerie Pike of Ottawa. It says what I have been trying to say.

I would like to express my concern with regard to the most recent, and seemingly endless, decreases in defence spending.

We apparently expect our military to undertake increasingly difficult assignments with not only less funding, but without the certainty of any increased support in the future.

If a commitment to a more peaceful world is still part of the stated foreign policy of this country, then we must be prepared to fully support our peacekeeping operations—

The federal government seemed eager to exploit the popularity of peacekeepers during the recent referendum campaign. While the ads themselves were excellent, one would think that a more concrete demonstration of support would be in order.

In the final analysis a nation should be judged not by the amount of its GNP but rather by the legacy of its contribution to humanitarian efforts. We are in a unique position of having peacekeeping expertise which is the envy of the world. While we may in the future establish an international peacekeeping college, we should in the present fully fund our military. Canadians are putting their lives on the line throughout the world and they deserve our total support. To do less is unconscionable.

• (2000)

We support the present action. We support the objective. We want that objective to be enlarged and to make it clear that it is long term.

It is time to give the men and women who serve in the Canadian forces some clear indication of what the policy is going to be in the future. Moreover, we must give

some indication that the resources are going to be there so that we will continue to be capable and effective, not only in this peacekeeping operation but in others that we may be called upon to do elsewhere in the world.

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to the resolution before the House this evening which with our amendment the Liberal Party is very pleased to support.

Who can look at the agony, the misery, the deprivation of tens and tens of thousands of Somalis and not long to personally be able to go out and do something to help them.

I would like to begin my comments by thanking all of those people, Canadian and non-Canadian, who for months and months have toiled under dreadful conditions to try and bring in our name, I would like to think, some help to these starving, violence-ridden human beings, victims of such a horrible situation in Somalia.

We support the United Nations resolution which has enacted an enforcement action, or peacemaking, to resolve some of the problems that exist today in Somalia. Although the peacemaking forces are going to be U.S. led, the United Nations will have an ongoing role in keeping track of what the situation is and the Secretary-General will have a role in continuing decision-making with regard to the situation.

It gives us some hope that finally human beings, innocent victims of violence and famine, are the focus and the target of an enforcement action and that we do not only respond when our own self-interest is at stake. This I believe is an important step for the United Nations and the world and something that can give all of us hope.

Another area to do with this whole operation that gives me some hope for the future is the fact that we are taking an enforcement action to disarm those people who are provoking violence against innocent people in Somalia. Those young people, 11, 12, and 13 years old and their warlord masters did not come into possession of those weapons through their own making. We in the western industrial nations of the world, in the north in particular, have profited greatly over decades by arming people throughout the world and those arms have fallen