

Special Debate

There is an increase in the incidence of alcoholism in the units that have been deployed. There have been increased disciplinary problems. This is natural because people are under an awful lot of tension and it will unquestionably affect them.

• (1915)

The whole thing boils down to a morale problem which I think would be difficult to deal with at the best of times. Added on to other problems that the Canadian force are now experiencing I think it is somewhat devastating. Basically we are asking our troops to be burned out. I do not think we can afford to do that.

With regard to the mandate in Bosnia and Croatia, Reform in December last year laid down what we thought were four reasonable conditions which Canada should demand or we should withdraw. First, peacekeepers should be left alone. They should not be taken hostage. They should not be interfered with. Second, we asked that the Sarajevo airport be opened and left open in order that humanitarian assistance could be brought in. Third, we asked that all aid convoys be able to proceed unimpeded. Finally, we asked that a ceasefire be in place and be holding and be seen to be holding.

The only one of these four proposals that has been met, and that is only recently, is the one to leave the peacekeepers alone. The Sarajevo airport has been closed many times. Aircraft have been shot at. Aid convoys have been held up or refused passage. Of course it is obvious there is no ceasefire and it is not holding.

The Reform Party believes the solution to this is that Canada should accept the situation is not now resolved, nor is it likely to be in the near future. This is a situation where there are no white hats. Every one of the ethnic people in that area are to some extent responsible for atrocities: the Croats, Muslims and the Serbs. Some may be more prone to it than others but everyone is guilty to an extent.

As I said just a few moments ago, Canadian resources are stretched to the limit. We should be aware of this and we have to accept it. It can be safely said that Canada has done her share. We have now committed our troops there for three years. We have done exemplary work. I do not think that anyone can point at Canada and say that we are not pulling our weight.

There are other UN forces committed there that are much less efficient. Some of them are not doing their job at all. One particular unit, which I will not mention by name, has brand new armoured personnel carriers bought by the UN, purchased in Korea, and it refuses to use them. It wants to keep the mileage low because the UN depreciates them and it is then going to take them home in almost brand new condition.

Other contingents will not go to the front lines. They will support only one side or the other in the conflict. It is only Canada and a few other nations that are truly perceived by the antagonists to be unbiased and impartial.

The Reform Party proposes that Canada should say: "We have done our share. It is time to withdraw our forces from Bosnia and Croatia". We should say to the United Nations that we understand that it will take them some time to find replacements. I suggest that an initial timeframe of three months' grace be given, after which time Canada would withdraw from the region.

I believe this is possible in Croatia. It might be more difficult in Bosnia. I do not think that Canada would be unreasonable if the time has to be extended. It could be but I think it should be extended by very short increments.

Finally, we should have learned a very dramatic lesson from our involvement in Bosnia and Croatia. All of us have at some time understood that we got in there with the thought that we were going there to do good. We have done well. The problem is that there was no agreement.

Canada should insist for instance that there be a time limit on our involvement. There should be an insistence that the people who are there want us there and that they want to come to a peaceful solution, that they want to solve the thing.

The matter of rules of engagement must be very clearly specified and they must be acceptable to Canada before we say yes we will go in. The financial aspect should be discussed and approved.

• (1920)

Unless we do this, Canada may once again wind up in a commitment such as we have here where our withdrawal, without question, will result in an accelerated conflict. I see no way of avoiding this. By Canadians staying there we are just extending it.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, we were 29 years in Cyprus and we certainly cannot stand 29 years in Bosnia and Croatia.

Therefore, the Reform Party advocates that Canada tell the UN that we would like our commitment to come to an end. We will give it a three-month period of grace after which time we will effectively withdraw.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are witnessing today the democratization of Canada's foreign policy. It began with the review by the joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons with certain recommendations to the government. The government responded and in that response it said that it wanted to involve Parliament in future important defence and foreign policy decisions. Therefore, I am very pleased that we are having this debate tonight. I recommend that we have more such debates.