

Government Orders

Once the decision of the international community was made to stop that aggression, we had taken an irrevocable step, and the question is where do we go from there? I would suggest that in this case there is no ideal solution. Establishing the rule of law and establishing peace is sometimes messy. Those young people who demonstrated in my riding today, and the young people who demonstrate everywhere, do so because a lot of young Canadians and other people were prepared to pay a very significant price to deter aggression. Sometimes force has to be exerted.

It has been an agonizing few weeks for the Government of Canada in trying to make those judgments. We are of the view, as are most of the countries of the western industrialized world, that sanctions will not only not work but that they are imposing a terrible, terrible cost on the world's poor, that they are increasing the destabilization of the Middle East, and that the ultimatum presented by the nations of the United Nations was in fact a reasonable notice to Saddam Hussein that his aggression would not be tolerated, would not be sustained, and would not be condoned by the world.

I would like to know if it is in fact the policy of the New Democratic Party that the world should not have gone in to stop the expansion of Saddam Hussein. I can find nothing to recommend him as a world leader. I can find nothing to recommend him as a liberator of Kuwait or any other country. I think that the international community was quite right in going in to stop him.

What is being suggested is that somehow that action could be taken with no further implications and that is not the reality. The world community has to determine what is the best way to resolve this situation, not what is the perfect way, but in a very imperfect world and faced with a series of very unattractive options, what is the one way that has the best chance of defending and supporting the principles of international order?

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, we are debating government motion No. 27 which states "that this House reaffirms its support of the United Nations in ending the aggression by Iraq against Kuwait". The government members who are speaking are not addressing the intent of the motion, especially the ministers. The minister did not answer the questions posed by the hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence. I ask her again; What does the government hope to achieve by having this motion passed in this House?

What powers, what authority, what flexibility will this motion give the government that it does not have now?

My second question is, this, and I want it on record; will the minister support the Liberal amendment which adds to the motion of the government "through the continued use of economic sanctions such support to exclude offensive military action by Canada at this time"? The key words are "at this time". We are saying that we may support military action in the future, but not at this time. Could she be very specific in her answer, and not beat around the bush?

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): Mr. Speaker, constitutionally in Canada, the resolution of this House does not change the power or the Crown prerogative to make the key decisions as to what the mandate of our forces will be and what we will do. This is a motion to express the will of the House, but it is not within the power of this House to make those decisions with respect to the disposition of military forces.

The point I made was that there are two constitutional principles here. One is where the power resides to make those decisions. I think members can understand why it is the prerogative of the Crown because of the kinds of decisions and the speed with which decisions have to be made.

There is also a constitutional provision called ministerial responsibility, the principle of responsible government, whereby the government, having exercised its prerogatives and its powers, nonetheless answers to those and is accountable for them to the House.

That is the purpose of this debate. It is a very serious purpose, because there are many decisions yet to be made. I want to tell the hon. member that the members of the government are listening very seriously to the concerns and views that are being expressed by all members of this House. It is a very important time and I think all of us agree that many of the points raised, for example, by the hon. member for the Yukon, the leader of the NDP, were very well expressed today.

These are questions we have been wrestling with and it was very appropriate for those questions to be put by the hon. member so that the ministers of the Crown could respond to them. What we have tried to do, in keeping with our particular responsibilities, is to put before the House the reasons and the rationale for the government's position.