

Perhaps some Canadians are more comfortable with a United Nations that talks, not a United Nations that acts. Perhaps some see it as a place for soapboxes and UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) boxes, not a place where the world comes together to take the hard decisions which peace requires. Perhaps they see it as a place for people with concerns, not convictions.

Mr. Speaker, it is said we have not waited long enough, that perhaps the message has not gotten through. Saddam Hussein has had 167 days to contemplate the consequences of his actions. Saddam Hussein knows what he is up against. Mr. Aziz said that in Geneva last week.

If we were to make January 15 a mobile date and extend it to February 15 this year or perhaps February 15 next year, by what form of logic could it be argued that Saddam would treat the resolve of the United Nations more seriously than he does now?

What about sanctions and giving them more time to work? That is an issue this Government has given serious consideration. There is no doubt that if the international consensus held, the Iraqi economy might be seriously weakened if we waited six months or a year. But that is not the end of the argument. There is no guarantee whatsoever that economic weakness would get Saddam out of Kuwait. There is every indication from the words and deeds of Saddam Hussein that thousands of Iraqis -- men and women and children -- and thousands of those Kuwaitis we seek to liberate, would be made to starve before Saddam would allow his army to suffer. In that regime of terror, we cannot rely on popular discontent to dissuade a dictator. And during a period of further delay, the plunder of Kuwait would continue, and we could find ourselves trying to free a society which has ceased to exist.

Mr. Speaker, there is a notion out there that the choice is between a peaceful present -- the status quo -- and a terrible war. That is a dangerous, misleading illusion. There is no peaceful status quo. The Gulf region today -- the entire Middle East -- is incendiary, a time bomb of conflict, extremism and terror. The assassination in Tunis yesterday of Abu Iyad and Abu Al-Hol is an example, as was the terrible violence which occurred at the mosque in East Jerusalem in October, the bombings which led to the death of pilgrims at Mecca in 1987 and 1989, the riots which rocked Jordan in mid-1989 and the civil war in Lebanon. These can become fuses for frightening carnage and chaos. That tension is immeasurably more acute because of Iraq's aggression. As long as Iraq remains in Kuwait, the time bomb ticks and the world is playing Russian roulette with its own future.