

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maurice Tremblay (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, it is an extremely painful experience for me to rise in the House and speak in this debate, at a time when from minute to minute, we hear the conflict is escalating, attacks are becoming more frequent and casualties are rising.

In this context, the resolution we have been debating for many hours has become very meaningful indeed.

Mr. Speaker, in November and December I had the privilege of being at the United Nations when they were discussing resolution 678, which led to the debate we are having today.

I remember, with the delegates of the Canadian mission at the UN, that there were fierce and furious discussions on the issue.

Faced with this alternative, Mr. Speaker, the reaction was that they would not let the situation deteriorate to that point. However, after experiencing this new and different atmosphere at the UN after the Berlin Wall was brought down and the eastern block and communism were dismantled, we felt and we still feel the incredible strength and will of this forum, constituted as the United Nations. We felt it was the right instrument to deal with these problems, whether it was apartheid, the Middle East or, more specifically, Iraq.

What I found so impressive and convincing about the Canadian position, Mr. Speaker, was that Canada as such is an intermediary power. It is neither a superpower nor a small power. Among the 159 member states at the UN, the vast majority are small powers, countries that do not have the capabilities of the superpowers, meaning the economic and military capacity and the prestige that those powers have.

A few moments ago I heard the hon. member for Calgary East say that Kuwait as an oil-producing country had about 10 per cent of world production and was thus an important country. Doesn't the hon. member realize that the small powers I referred to which are members of the UN are always the first to be affected by the threat of rising energy prices? These small countries, members of the Commonwealth or the francophonie with whom

Canada has close links through its external aid programs, tend to suffer most as a result of these conflicts and threats. Countries that lack economic resources and a certain degree of military capability are the same countries that are hard pressed to maintain their democratic system of government. It is those countries, Mr. Speaker, that appeal to powers like Canada to intervene in these world conflicts because if no one intervenes before the problem escalates, the many small powers of our planet will be the first to fall victim to the invader.

• (2000)

Mr. Speaker, there is something I find hard to understand. Of course, we have to say that war is absurd. That is obvious. I never saw anyone either here in the House of Commons or at the UN say that war was the answer. Everyone agrees that war is absurd. But there was also a consensus, Mr. Speaker. In the Security Council, except for the five permanent members, the remaining members, the other ten, are basically small countries. Whether we are talking about Ethiopia, Zaire, Ivory Coast, Malaysia or Colombia, they are all small powers and they also voted because they are the first to be at risk as a result of such conflicts, because of the threat to their energy supply and their democratic systems.

Today, in the present conflict, these smaller countries are appealing to more important powers like Canada to help maintain a balanced situation. That is the meaning of the resolution adopted on November 29 at the UN and here in the House of Commons. It was exactly that.

It is easy for someone who does not have to make decisions to say: You should have said or done this or that. However, there is one man in this world who is not in a position to say that, and that is Saddam Hussein.

During my experience in New York, I had a feeling of great hope and optimism as a result of this development. I had a similar experience before in New York and Geneva and elsewhere, but this time, Mr. Speaker, I found that tremendous progress had been made towards achieving a world wide awareness of human problems.

Today's failure is indeed just that, Mr. Speaker, but these things do not happen in a vacuum. What we have to look at, what we have to do, I think, is not condemn those who made the decisions, because what we had was