

Government Orders

Yesterday there was the threat of war. Today there is a war. Canadians could well be casualties. Iraq's aggression upon Kuwait is a very serious matter. The UN's response, Canada's response, is a very serious matter.

I sit in this House to represent the views of the constituents of Fraser Valley East and to represent the views of Canadians. Canadians have expressed their concern, a concern I share. We are concerned about the lives that have been lost to date and the lives that could be lost. The lives of Canadian forces men and women are in the balance and we have called upon the Armed Forces to lay their lives on the line. We have done this because we recognize that without the principles of law and order and without tangible values society devolves into barbarism and civilization self-destructs.

At this point I would like to say something about our Armed Forces personnel serving in the gulf. They follow an honourable profession and are doing what they have been called upon to do because that is their duty.

These men and women have volunteered to join the forces, not from some Rambo-type motive, but because it is in this way they feel they can best serve their country. In times of peace they are often ignored, but in times of war we seek them out to defend us. They have never let us down and will not do so in the hostilities that are taking place now.

• (1620)

Let us not underestimate what we are asking them to do. While I am sure each of us and every one of them has always known they might be called upon to take part in a war, until now it has seemed a remote possibility. However, now that war is a reality, we are asking them to fulfil the hardest part of their obligation to Canada. In doing this, we have a commitment to them and it is that we support them both with the means to carry out their duties and by our moral support. We have to make sure they know we back them wholeheartedly.

I want our servicemen and women in the gulf and around the world to know that they are always in our thoughts and that we thank them for taking on this onerous task. Their professionalism and dedication to duty is not in doubt and, whatever happens in the coming

days, we all pray for their safety and a speedy resolution to the conflict. To the Canadian forces, I say, thank you.

Canada enshrines its beliefs in our bodies of laws. Our institutions reflect who we are and what we stand for. Our support of the UN and the actions that we have taken to date on the Persian Gulf are an extension of this.

In Canada, we have safe institutions which protect our citizens because we have a society with certain values by which we live. When we support the UN, we act upon our beliefs, we achieve a peace of mind, and we give meaning to our beliefs. What Canada is doing, in this United Nations action, is putting into practice our pretension as a nation.

We, in this Chamber, are aware of the costs involved with this war. We are also aware of the costs should Iraq be allowed to benefit from its violation and aggression of Kuwait. We do not take this decision to support the United Nations lightly. Should we fail to contain aggression between states in this conflict, we will signal to other renegade leaders that their blatant disregard for the sovereignty of others could go unchallenged.

We will signal that the only cost to be incurred in violating another state and in perpetuating atrocities upon the citizens of another state is a tongue-lashing by the international community. In good conscience, we cannot allow this kind of message to be sent. If we fail to back our beliefs with actions, our beliefs become worthless. All the good words in the world are meaningless without action. Our credibility is on the line. I do not mean our credibility as a world actor, although that is a consideration, I mean our credibility as a society. It is our credibility to ourselves that we are preserving.

Canada acts within the UN because that organization reflects our beliefs in civilized order. I do not view this situation lightly but we cannot turn our backs on Kuwait. We cannot allow Iraq's aggression to go unchallenged. I am well aware of the gravity of this situation and it is with this awareness that I lend my full support to the motion that we are debating here today.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, the debate appears to be centred on whether or not the sanctions, if they had been given more time, would have