

Oral Questions

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, Article I of the Charter of the United Nations provides for circumstances during which members who freely associate with the United Nations may be called upon, in the interests of international security, to suppress acts of aggression.

Such a request was specifically made under Resolution 678 of the Security Council, a resolution co-sponsored by Canada, which was a member of the Security Council at that time. Paragraph No. 3 of that resolution states that, in the event of the failure of Saddam Hussein to respond to a reasonable request to withdraw from a neighbouring, innocent Arab state that he has invaded—and if he persists in his refusal—member states are requested to come to the aid of the United Nations to seek to enforce resolutions of the United Nations.

As Mr. Pearson said and as I referred to this morning in my speech, the fact of the matter is the United Nations must be defended because the absence of the United Nations means the absence of effective peace in the world.

An hon. member: Answer the question.

Mr. Mulroney: My hon. friend wants to know whether we are going to defend the United Nations. We will not stand idly by. When the United Nations asks for support, we will support the United Nations because the United Nations supports world peace.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister while he is in the mood for honouring the United Nations Charter.

When the United Nations Security Council imposed economic sanctions, it established a special committee of the council to assess and report on the effectiveness of those sanctions. That committee has yet to report. Yet various experts, including the director of the CIA, have said that sanctions are having a very deep impact, including the war-fighting capacity of Iraq.

How can Canada commit this country to go to war when the United Nations Security Council has yet to decide on the effectiveness of sanctions, as it must do

under the charter, before it initiates any further military action?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the question as to how long one would wait for sanctions to take effect on Iraq, if they would ever take effect on Iraq, is an important question.

The hon. member knows, because he has been a member of the parliamentary committee before which these matters have been discussed, that it is possible to have reports. We have already had reports. Some have been circulated from the committee to which he refers.

There is no obligation, unless he has just invented one in his own mind, for that committee to make a report as a condition precedent to other decisions being taken by the Security Council. He knows that.

While we are speaking about evidence with respect to the effectiveness of sanctions, he will remember that when I appeared before the standing committee I made it clear that there was no evidence at all that economic sanctions were having an effect upon the economic—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): —upon the capacity of Iraq—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Copps: G.I. Joe.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, may I continue?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Secretary of State.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, I indicated that we had no evidence to suggest that the sanctions program in place was affecting the capacity of Saddam Hussein to make war.

I asked the hon. member who holds to a different view and who bases his policy on a different view, specifically, to provide me with any information he has. Indeed, I said, he has a duty to provide that information. That was weeks ago. I have not heard from him. If he has any any specific information, I would be interested in seeing it.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.