

Government Orders

I have no hesitation in wanting to support any initiative that would end the threat of nuclear weapons. I think we should embrace such an initiative. I would not know all the parameters or guidelines to put on such an initiative, but perhaps a new chapter will open up after this conflict which we are now in the middle of. Perhaps it will bring many more countries to the table to discuss exactly such a proposal.

Most of us here in the Chamber have children. I have five grandchildren and another one coming next month. This world needs global attention now. It needs global co-operation, specifically on the issue the hon. member brought forth.

How long will the world community wait for such action? Again, I think this conflict is going to make everyone impatient that we get along and get moving on such an initiative. I thank him for bringing this to my attention in the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate.

An hon. member: Madam Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The question and comments period is only five minutes at this point, so it has expired. We are going to the second 10-minute period. The hon. Minister for Employment and Immigration, on debate.

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, my colleague, the hon. member for Don Valley North, spoke briefly of his friendship with and his commendation of the State of Israel. I want to elaborate a little bit, if I may, on those comments today.

Let us be clear, Madam Speaker, on a number of things that have happened recently in the Middle East in ways that have created a tragic situation for the world. Like other hon. members, I am anguished that the peace and stability in the world, which seemed within our grasp with the fall of the Berlin wall and with the recent fall of other symbols of repression and the atmosphere of hope so many of us had for the future of the world and for international peace, has come to such an abrupt end with what we have seen happening in Iraq and in Kuwait. There is not a single member of the House who would have chosen this to happen, particularly in contrast to that period of hope.

I do want to pay tribute to an ally of Canada's and of the western world who has been put in a particularly appalling position by the state of affairs that has occurred. The politics of the Middle East are steeped in traditions and enmities that very few of us in the House and in our country can comprehend. They go back for centuries. I would not attempt to have a full knowledge of them, and I do not think any of us would.

It does seem to me that there is a very large difference between what is happening in the gulf today and those historic tensions in the Middle East that have been building up for so long and over so many centuries.

Saddam Hussein is a phenomenon unto himself. He is a devil of his own creation. He arose over a period of the past 10 years to become a threat to all of us. He would have done so, in my view, whether or not there had been tension between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and whether or not there was that ancient tension between Arabs and Israelis.

Saddam Hussein waged a war against Iran. It is problematic, but I believe he would have done so, whether or not those ancient tensions with Israel existed. He invaded Kuwait, and I believe he would have done so, whether or not there were those historic tensions with Israel.

Having said this, I want to state publicly that I regard the patience and constraint that Israel showed in the circumstance as being exemplary and I pay tribute to it. Imagine if we had been debating in this Chamber under conditions where we were threatened with an attack and a conflict that essentially had nothing to do with us. Iraq invades Kuwait and the leader of Iraq says that if he is attacked, he will attack Israel. What would we do if we were in such a position? Our Prime Minister referred to it briefly the other day in his speech when he talked about the context in which these threats were made against Israel. Would we have been able to sit still and not pre-empt such an attack? We may or may not have.

I think the fact that the State of Israel, a country that is 42 years old—younger than many of us in this Chamber—and smaller than Vancouver Island, was able to do that is worthy of our commendation. This does not mean, in my view, that the tensions between Israel and its neighbours do not have to be resolved. But I do think we have to understand the context in which they must be resolved and that the parties in the region have been