

Government Orders

What happens if we keep backing off and rewarding Saddam Hussein by saying: "This is all right. Deadlines do not matter. Don't pay attention to the United Nations. Don't pay attention. It doesn't matter"? I think sometime free and thinking people have to stand their ground, have to stand on principle, have to take a stand on things like this. Today is that day, and I support that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Madam Speaker, the crisis in the Persian Gulf is attracting universal attention. It is almost impossible to go anywhere without hearing about the crisis and the threat of war.

As I was listening to the Minister, I heard him say near the end of his remarks that there was no evidence the sanctions were working. I just cannot understand that after I have heard the greatest world experts agree that the sanctions against Iraq are working. I could quote figures provided to the u.s. Congress by Senator Mitchell, a man held in high esteem there. Tennessee Senator Gore, Senator Edward Kennedy, and even the leaders of the CIA have clearly indicated that the sanctions against Iraq are really working.

In spite of that, there are people who still claim that these sanctions will not bring Iraq to its knees. Yet, our own colleagues in the House, more specifically Mr. Axworthy, the hon members for Winnipeg South Centre, Burnaby—Kingsway and Fundy Royal, and Mr. Corbett, have seen with their own eyes that the sanctions are in the process of beating Iraq as an aggressor.

It is a fact that the whole history of the Middle East did not begin on August 2. It was following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq that public opinion suddenly became aware more than ever of the Middle East. This problem goes back a hundred years and represents a hundred years of injustice and exploitation of the people because there is oil underground. There are countries of the world which are determined to take over this wealth, even if it is not situated in their own country. But is it surprising that the Middle East crisis came finally to a head?

In the u.s. Congress, various senators have given concrete evidence that the sanctions were working. Of course, they are party to privileged information. 90 per cent of all Iraq imports have stopped. Even the Iraqi

currency paper is printed in England. Does this give you an idea just how much Iraq is on its knees? It is a country without an industrial infrastructure. It went overnight from camels to Cadillacs. It has no infrastructure. It depends on world imports. Together with other countries, Canada has managed to maintain an embargo.

• (1930)

Since the November 8 elections in the Congress however, we have been hearing a totally different story: we should be taking military measures and risk causing a war which would have a very uncertain outcome at the price of a tremendous loss of innocent lives. What for, when we can count on the support of other nations in the application of sanctions? That is a fact. So, it is no use trying to make us believe that sanctions do not work. It just is not true! The record will show that, if there is a war, it will be a point against the countries that started it and that is absolutely not necessary.

[*English*]

The longer sanctions are maintained, the weaker the aggressor, Iraq, becomes. The aggressor is weakening and what can be more desirable under the circumstances? We do not fight and they get weaker.

Logically, Iraq cannot continue for an indefinite period of time. The aggressor, Saddam Hussein, has a short countdown against him that is in our favour. One does not have to be a military strategist to understand the precarious situation that Iraq is facing internally.

In listening to the American senators in Congress, it became obvious that no one could criticize sanctions. No one could say they were not effective because they know they are effective. They work. Iraqis have no industrial infrastructure and they have no industry to maintain their military force that is needed. The Iraqis are completely dependent on imports and, as I mentioned before, their paper currency is actually printed in England. Can you imagine?

Canada's role in this whole affair has been diminished. We are not a military force nor a deterrent, for that matter, but in the past we never felt diminished because of our reputation as a peacekeeper. We were trusted and we had an independent foreign policy. Other countries could look to Canada as a sort of moral authority, requesting our support in the United Nations. What has