

Government Orders

Saddam Hussein will not be able to ignore the sanctions. His country will not be able to survive. We must be very patient and wait. If patience means saving the lives of Canadian soldiers or Iraqi children, it is worth it. If being patient means that mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters will not have to shed any tears, it is worth it.

[*English*]

Along with sanctions, Mr. Speaker, diplomatic efforts must also continue. No one doubts—and I am sure there is no doubt left after this week—that Saddam Hussein is a difficult man with whom to negotiate. We are not naive, but negotiate we must. We must find all of those openings which would make peace a possibility.

Our friends in the United States government refuse to consider any conditions for negotiation. But the anti-Iraq alliance is divided on this point. European and Arab nations appear much more willing to seek a negotiated way out.

American Congress persons, a number of whom I met with yesterday in Washington and colleagues I have spoken to in Europe, are much more willing to seek negotiation. We have new proposals from Yemen and France. They should be looked at seriously by Canada, and not rejected out of hand. Rather than following the forces of war blindly, Canada, has an obligation to align itself with those countries seeking peaceful resolutions.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. McLaughlin: There are those, Mr. Speaker, who would argue that agreement to conditions of withdrawal means rewarding aggression. I suggest it means rewarding compliance.

There are those who argue that to agree to conditions of withdrawal means losing face. I do not accept that characterization, but I do say to those who do, if the choice is between losing face or losing lives, the choice should be perfectly clear.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. McLaughlin: Today the Prime Minister has said that Canada will join in using force against Saddam Hussein. He did not speak at length about the cost of war, or the implications of war. It is a disturbing subject, I quite agree. But surely it is our responsibility at least to raise these issues before the Canadian public.

There is widespread doubt that any war against Iraq would be limited in scope. There is much greater belief that in fact the war would spread to the Middle East and to many countries outside of Iraq and Kuwait.

There are more than one million soldiers in the Gulf, 8,000 tanks, 3,000 aircraft, chemical and biological weapons and, it is reported, over 1,000 nuclear warheads.

The impact of a war on the environment could be catastrophic. Projections have been that given a nuclear accident, or the threat of fire in the oil fields, fires could last for years with devastating consequences for the air, the ozone layer, and the climate here in North America and elsewhere.

Other analysts have said that, if our objectives are to preserve stability in the Middle East and the related advantage that stability provides for oil supplies from the area, then going to war will not preserve or further those objectives. Going to war will destroy those objectives.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. McLaughlin: Mr. Speaker, the economic cost of war would be enormous. The rising price of oil would not only deepen our own recession, but take a terrible toll on the world's poorest countries.

The human cost, of course, the most important consideration, is impossible for many of us to grasp. We simply cannot know and we simply cannot project what might happen. It might be less serious than some people project; it might be more serious. Both military and political people are quite divided on that point, but we do know that there will be a human cost.

If we asked those people who served in the Vietnam or Korean wars, or those who have come to Canada as refugees about the reality of war, and if we should consider the war option before we are absolutely convinced that all other options will not work, we are sure what their answer would be. It is no surprise that the initiatives that are coming for peace proposals, for diplomatic proposals, are coming from those European countries which have felt war on their own soil and which, know by their very experience and in their souls what it means. We do not, except those people who have served in a war or who have come to this country as a result of a war in their own countries.