

Oral Questions

capability has been eliminated and wiped out, as the United States says?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that discussion of committee business is in order on the floor of the House in Question Period.

The committee knows that, because I have some responsibilities that arose from developments overnight, I am not able to take part in a committee hearing today. It also knows that I have regularly made myself available and intend to continue to do that.

With regard to the positions that have been put forward by the hon. member, I hope he will, in his questions in committee and in his conduct in this House, remember that his responsibilities as a member of Parliament go beyond using this place as a forum. They extend to accepting some element of responsibility for protecting the reputation and advancing the interests of this country.

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

I have considerable concern about his response to my colleague's question about the role of the UN. This government has insisted that our collaboration at this time in the war in the gulf is under UN operation. At this time the UN system is on the knife edge of success or failure.

I would like the minister to clarify for us right now what his statement was. It sounded as if he were saying that Canadian forces under Canadian command, with U.S. tactical over-all command, was better than UN command. Is that so?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence): No, Mr. Speaker, that is not what I said. I said in this case that there was nothing I was aware of that was available under the UN to command Canadian forces, except the military committee of the United Nations.

• (1450)

As the hon. member and her colleagues know, the military committee of the United Nations has not functioned over the past number of years. I would also suggest to the hon. member that the safety and opportunity for success of that command of Canadian men and women serving Canadian will to reinforce the resolu-

tions of the United Nations is much better under Canadian national command than under the command of a committee.

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister.

It is quite disturbing to try to understand what this government's commitment is to the United Nations. I believe that war must be always seen as failure. Conflict resolved by war is not a recipe for peace. Canada has traditionally played a role as peacekeeper, yet at the present time we find ourselves as combatants in the present crisis.

Can the Prime Minister tell us if there is active planning at this time for Canada to play a future peacekeeping role at the United Nations?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State for External Affairs discussed that point specifically with the Secretary-General of the United Nations earlier today. The Secretary-General of the UN was, as has already been reported to the House, particularly gratified by not only Canada's support but Canada's interest in putting forward some innovative ideas to try to be helpful.

My hon. friend raises a very perplexing question. She says that it is troubling to understand our commitment to the United Nations. What could be clearer than the commitment of this government and this House to the United Nations, when the United Nations at the moment of its greatest challenge invited as a result of a Security Council resolution all members to come to the aid of the United Nations? They sent out an appeal for aid to the United Nations to sustain the United Nations at the moment of its greatest challenge. Canada heard the appeal and Canada responded in the manner that I indicated last night.

Perhaps I may just very briefly respond to the important question raised by my friend and by some of her colleagues in regard to the United Nations in earlier circumstances and the command structures. Since there seems to be some people who take offence at the involvement of an ally, the United States, in these matters, I refer my hon. friend to a statement made by Prime Minister St. Laurent in this House in regard to Korea and the command structure there. He said on September 1, 1950: "They (the Americans) were the only