

Special Debate

needs to be done and why this party supports the action of the government.

He has questioned, quite rightly, what happens afterward and what are the long term consequences of what we are doing. He has said too that this brings into question the future of peacekeeping. Canada has been an historic player in peacekeeping. It seems to me that we are in what might be described as a sea change now. We are in a situation which requires not just peacekeeping, but peacemaking.

We have to ask not only what the policy is going to be in future for our forces but we have to ask also—and I want to use my time to ask the specific question—will the resources be available to our men and women overseas to do the job that they have to do? Not only have Canadians got a record in peacekeeping because they are credible, but because they are competent.

I along with other people was in the gulf and had a chance to see for myself that competence and the fact that the Canadian forces performed so well when called upon to do a job. The question is: Are the resources going to be available to them in future?

I remind the House that during the gulf war when our ships were going overseas, we took a gun out of the museum to put on the deck to make the armaments possible. That is not the kind of equipment that competent men and women deserve when they go into a battle situation.

I would remind the House it is not just the gulf where our equipment has been called into question. When General Mackenzie came back from overseas, he said: "Canada won't be able to participate in additional United Nations peacekeeping operations unless the Canadian forces get more money and troops. Our ability", he said, "to respond to future requests has pretty much reached its limit". This was before we went into Somalia. This was pre-Somalia.

He said our infantry force is 1,200 members smaller than the metro Toronto police force and yet we are policing the world. He asked if we could not channel the peace dividend from the cold war into peacekeeping equipment and capability for Canadian troops. That has been echoed by others.

It has been echoed by Colonel Alex Morrison who was formerly of the Armed Forces. As a matter of fact, he suggested that the defence department is thinking of forming a special force specially designed to help meet Canada-UN peacekeeping commitments.

Analysts immediately noted, including Mr. Morrison, that the option is being considered at exactly the same time that the strength of the Armed Forces is being cut. He said: "It leaves me perplexed. On the one hand, the government is systematically decreasing the size of the Armed Forces, and now it is talking about setting up a special force. It indicates that the federal government wants Canada to remain a world leader in peacekeeping without going back on its policy to reduce the size of the Armed Forces".

These statements are from capable men and women, some of whom are serving now, some of whom have served previously. They call into question the irony of at the one hand increasing our commitments around the world, stretching our resources to the limit, and at the same time cutting back on our forces and cutting back on funds.

Recently we saw evidence again in the last economic statement that another \$1 billion is being taken from the defence department in addition to the cuts that had been made already, without any indication of where those cuts are going to be made or what the effect might be on peacekeeping or where in fact peacekeeping might have a priority within the spending estimates of the department. These are the questions that the government has to answer. The men and women who are going overseas deserve some answers to those questions.

In this budget as in previous budgets, the Department of Finance is dictating the policy of the defence department. That is not good enough for credible and competent men and women going overseas. They want a clear indication from this government as to where it intends to take us in the future and how they will be supported.

At the same time as that policy statement was made by the Minister of Finance, the Auditor General was questioning the spending priorities of the Department of National Defence. Capital projects are vastly overspent; the reserves called into question in terms of their funding and their capabilities; spare parts are far too costly. We have the irony of increasing our commitments without a clear policy direction. At the same time as funds are being reduced, the spending that is going on of