

*Government Orders*

I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Deputy Speaker and to all the members of this House on their election.

As the member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, I represent the constituency with the greatest number of voters in western Canada. Located on the west coast just southeast of the city of Vancouver, my constituency abuts the Canadian—American border. It contains the city of White Rock, the south portion of the city of Surrey and the southwest corner of the township of Langley. Although the riding is only 250,000 square kilometres, it contains a wide diversity of communities.

Part of my constituency is dedicated to agriculture. A number of large vegetable farms are located on some of the richest agricultural land in Canada. Dairy and poultry farms are located in the Cloverdale and South Langley areas. My constituency also has light industrial areas that provide a wide variety of commercial goods. These industries as well as other small businesses have raised a concern about Canada's national debt and the enormous federal deficit. These business people want their government to take control to reduce spending. They say that if the government wants to increase economic activity then it should work toward reducing taxes and the cost of doing business in Canada.

However, the greatest land use in my constituency is residential. The community of White Rock is located on the shores of Semiahmoo Bay and is well known as a retirement centre because of its mild climate. The area has also attracted a large number of families and as a result there is a growing element of the constituents who commute outside of the riding's boundaries.

My constituency is one of the fastest growing areas of this country, but unfortunately one of the aspects of rapid growth is an accompanying growth in criminal activity. During the election campaign my constituents considered this to be one of the major problems. My constituents have made it quite clear that they expect this government to bring greater protection to society.

My constituents elected me on a platform of fiscal responsibility, parliamentary accountability and criminal justice reform. I would like to thank the voters of Surrey—White Rock—South Langley for their confidence in me and to assure them that I am their servant and I will do everything in my power to accomplish these goals.

However, this evening I am here to speak on Canada's role in Bosnia and I do so as an ordinary Canadian. Like most Canadians, I have read, listened and watched countless stories about the tragedy of Bosnia and Hercegovina. These stories have evoked a wide range of emotion. I have been horrified by the indiscriminate attacks on civilians, especially the children. I have been disturbed by reports of the political strategy of ethnic cleaning. I have been very proud of the role that Canadian peacekeepers have had in Bosnia.

I have also been very irritated at the unwillingness of the political and military leaders of the warring factions to reach a peaceful solution. I have expressed frustration with the UN's inability to take definitive action to resolve this issue and I was outraged when I heard reports of Canadian peacekeepers being subjected to mock executions.

When our troops are subjected to such treatment it is difficult to disagree with those individuals who call for the withdrawal of Canadian troops. At some point we may have to do so, but I believe that despite all the adversity it is critical that Canadians remain in Bosnia. No matter how bad the situation is now, without Canadian peacekeepers the situation would be much worse. Canadians are going to have to decide if they are prepared to live with the consequences of a unilateral withdrawal, a withdrawal that could result in a full fledged war and the genocide of ethnic groups.

If this were to occur, could Canadians sit back and wash their hands of the affair? Could we say that this is not our concern? Are we prepared to accept the fact that we might have been able to stop this, but that we got tired and frustrated?

•(1910)

I know that when we see television reports of children killed we wonder what good United Nations peacekeepers are doing. When we hear reports of entire families being wiped out we wonder what peace Canadian soldiers are supposed to keep. However, without the presence of Canadian and other United Nations personnel, Bosnia would probably be faced with the wholesale slaughter of children and civilians.

This is the choice that Canadians are facing. Do we withdraw our troops and accept the prospect of full fledged war and potential genocide or do we indefinitely commit our troops to a peacekeeping mission where there is no peace to keep?

I do not imagine that many Canadians are prepared to commit our troops indefinitely to an ill defined mission in a country where political and military leaders have shown little inclination to resolve the issue. Many of the difficulties appear to be caused more by the United Nations mandate than by the mission itself.

As the outgoing commander of United Nations peacekeepers in Bosnia stated, it is fine for the politicians and diplomats to pass these wonderful resolutions but they do not mean very much unless they are accompanied by the willpower to carry them out.

We have to give our peacekeepers the authority and resources to carry out their mandate and perhaps Canada and the United Nations need to redefine the rules of this mandate. However, is the mission itself worthwhile?

For those who believe that Canada should withdraw its peacekeepers I ask them whether they are prepared to abandon the people of Bosnia to the mercies of the factional leaders. A glance at history has shown that over the last 50 years we have