

Government Orders

Governments. I understand my hon. friend's concern about other conflicts, but the Government had, for compassionate reasons to take quick action to help countries adapt to a new situation. Speaking of assistance, I suggest our aim must always be to help those most disadvantaged and this is the basic idea behind our policy of providing assistance to people who must face a situation for which they are not responsible.

I think my hon. friend understands now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The question and comment period is now over. Debate. The Hon. Member for Victoria has the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brewin (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I must say I appreciate this opportunity. It is the first I have had in my new role as critic for defence, disarmament and arms control for our party and I look forward to using that position to forward a number of important policies for the country. It is an interesting time to become involved in these issues.

In beginning my job in this role, I want to pay particular tribute to the colleague who preceded me, the hon. member for Brant, who served in this role for a number of years with great distinction. I may say, there were others who preceded him and I will have an opportunity to refer to at least one of them in a minute or two.

Generally, I see the importance of the time that we are in as a time for Canada to define very clearly a new role for itself internationally and, consequently, a new role for itself in terms of defence, disarmament and arms control policies.

I would just make brief reference, at the outset of the debate, to two or three particular issues. For the first time since the end of the war, we now have an opportunity to have a genuine peace dividend as a result of the changing conditions in eastern Europe. We have an opportunity for a new role for the armed services. We have an opportunity for imaginative leadership in the Arctic and in the Pacific in the area of arms control policies.

We have an opportunity to provide leadership to bring the collective agreement that had served us in Europe, this country and others, for so many years, NATO, to an

end and to have a new role for collective security in Europe, governed primarily by Europeans. There is no longer a need for Canada and the United States to maintain troops in Europe. There is no longer a need for NATO. Canada's policy must be to bring NATO to an end and, if NATO will not end, then Canada should withdraw as soon as possible from that organization.

We will have an opportunity, in the weeks ahead, to discuss a new arrangement for surveillance of the continent and an end to the NORAD agreement, which winds down in March of next year.

The Iraqi crisis was clearly brought on, in the final instance, by a breach of international law by Iraq. Our party stands with all parties in the House of Commons in condemning the Iraqi invasion of August 2, in condemning the continued occupation of Kuwait by Iraq, and in condemning the keeping of hostages by the Government of Iraq. All of those are in breach of international law and in breach of obligations under the UN charter. We stand in support of the United Nations and the international community in condemning the breach by Iraq of international law under the charter.

• (1640)

We support the United Nations' call on Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and to free the hostages. We support the UN sanctions and boycott of Iraq. We support the UN authorization of military action to enforce these sanctions against Iraq.

For the Canadian role, we say that, if we had been here in Parliament when this crisis first broke out, we would have urged a different military role for Canada than that urged and adopted by the government. We would have said that Canada, as a member of the Security Council, should have not provided direct military involvement in the enforcement of the blockade, but rather reserved its position so that it could operate as a peacekeeper when the crisis was over.

However, our contingent is in the Persian Gulf and it is our position that to withdraw the contingent directly from the Persian Gulf would send the wrong signal to Iraq and Saddam Hussein. It is therefore our position that there should be a change within the particular alignment and that our contingent should serve instead in the Gulf of Oman, reserving itself again for a peacekeeping role when the crisis is over.