

Government Orders

What I have tried to point out is that the constitutional, legal authority to change that mandate, which has not been changed, is the royal prerogative. That decision has not yet been made and it is why this debate is taking place. I want to say that as a member of the government I have been very grateful for the insightful and thoughtful comments that have been made in this House today.

I have tried to hear as many of them as I can, either directly or on television, because it is a very difficult decision. The operating mandate of our forces has not changed. It is a misconception on the part of some Canadians that their being in the gulf now to enforce sanctions means that they would not possibly become involved in combat. That could have happened at any given time and they would of course have behaved appropriately.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the minister.

I preface my question by pointing out that the minister has made reference to the conflict in Korea some 41 years ago. The minister will know—and I am surprised that she did not draw it to the attention of the House—that the troops engaged in that particular conflict were of course under United Nations command. That is not the case with the troops that would be engaged in the conflict if, God forbid, war breaks out in this particular instance.

I want to draw to the minister's attention the fact—and I am sure she is aware of it—that she is, as I am, from Vancouver, British Columbia. The minister will know and will recall that on the weekend literally thousands of British Columbians gathered in the heart of her constituency in front of the art gallery—young people, teachers, war veterans and others—urging this government not to plunge Canada into a war, to give sanctions more time to work, and to give diplomacy more time to work.

The minister knows that today some 2,000 high school and university students felt so strongly on this question that they demonstrated, peacefully, outside the minister's office.

How can the minister defend the policy of this government which could conceivably, within a matter of literally hours at this point, involve Canadian troops in a military

offensive, no longer in the enforcement of sanctions but in a military offensive, in a war, the consequences of which would be absolutely devastating?

The minister has talked about what is happening to Kuwait now. Of course what is happening in Kuwait is very destructive, but what on earth would happen to Kuwait in the event of a war? It would mean the death of tens of thousands of Kuwaitis, the destruction of the environment, and the rise of Iran and Syria as the key players in that area.

Will the minister not recognize that the people of British Columbia, and the people of Vancouver Centre, are fundamentally opposed to our involvement in a war and want to give peace a chance? Will she not stand in her place, accept that, and speak out against the madness of war?

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): Mr. Speaker, as the daughter of two war veterans I do not have to be told about the horrors of war. I am deeply concerned about it and I share the concern of many people in British Columbia. Equally, there are many people in British Columbia who have indicated their strong support for the stand the government is taking. The difficult judgment that has to be made is what is the more costly route. It is true that war is a frightening possibility.

• (2100)

I would be curious to know whether it is the position of the New Democratic Party that the countries of the world should not have gone in to stop Iraq from going into Saudi Arabia because that, in fact, was the key action which has involved the international community. It was the decision of the international community that Iraqi aggression had to be stopped, and it could only be stopped by force. Calling Saddam Hussein and asking him kindly not to go into Saudi Arabia was not terribly effective. Neither in fact, have been the implications of world statesmen who claim to know and to have had a good relationship with Saddam Hussein.

No one perhaps has a better moral claim to Saddam Hussein's ear than Perez de Cuellar, who was so instrumental in helping to disengage the war between Iraq and Iran. It is obviously one of the great defeats and tragedies of his career that he has been unable to encourage or to convince Saddam Hussein to step back.