

Government Orders

terms of the foreign policy of our country in dealing with this.

To complete, in answer to his question—and it is really further as well to the hon. member from Winnipeg—what kind of role and what kind of say Canada has in a situation like this directly depends on how prepared we are to be there, contributing. Unless we have Canadian forces in the situation, we cannot expect to have a voice in the situation.

Canada is respected internationally because in the past we have been present and accounted for. In the past when Canadians have had to make sacrifices to be part of some effort internationally, to respect peace and international law, those sacrifices and the blood that has been spilled by Canadians are the price for us having a voice and respect internationally today.

• (1220)

It is not easy, but it is in fact the reality with which we are dealing. I think that is an important element in this.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to participate in the debate on this very important question, and specifically on the government's motion.

[*Translation*]

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I wish to stress that the New Democratic Party fully supports the condemnation of the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, as well as the rest of the resolution which states, for example, that “encouraged by the unprecedented international consensus demanding the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and the full restoration of the legitimate government of Kuwait,” the House affirms “unequivocally its support for Canada’s actions in the United Nations Security Council”.

Of course we support these principles set out in the motion, as well as “all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions adopted since August 2”.

Mr. Speaker, the problem we have is with the part following that. The part about supporting without restriction “the dispatch of members of the Canadian Forces to take part in the multinational military effort in and around the Arabian Peninsula”. That specific part is the one we have a big problem with. The government of

Canada always took the position that collective action under the United Nations, as integral part of our foreign policy, is the best way to ensure lasting international peace and security.

However, Mr. Speaker, recent decisions made by the Conservative government in response to the Gulf Crisis take us far away from this basic Canadian foreign policy principle that a great many Canadians agree with.

[*English*]

As I said, I want to make it very clear that we join in the unreserved condemnation of the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. We fully support the United Nations resolutions which have been adopted to respond to this aggression on the part of Saddam Hussein.

As well, I want to note that Canada’s response has not been in the traditions of this country. Indeed, that started with the failure of the government to recall Parliament to allow parliamentarians to debate this very important decision to send troops into the Middle East to the gulf at the earliest possible opportunity.

During Question Period on Monday, I reminded the House of the fact that in August 1988, when the government sent peacekeeping troops to the Iran-Iraq border following the cessation of hostilities on that border, that the then Minister of National Defence indicated: “When such a major new undertaking is given, I have a moral responsibility to report to the people’s representatives to ask for their support.”

That moral responsibility has been completely abdicated by the government. We can certainly contrast this, as other members have pointed out, with a decision to recall Parliament in August of 1987 to deal with 174 refugees arriving on the shores of Nova Scotia. There was no hesitation to recall Parliament then.

Indeed, many other jurisdictions and Parliaments were recalled by their governments, including the British Parliament, to deal with this crisis in the Middle East. We condemn the failure of the government to recall Parliament at the earliest possible occasion to ensure that we would have an opportunity to speak and that our voices might be heard before the decision was finally made to send our troops into the Middle East. We recognize very clearly that this is simply a continuation of