

*Government Orders*

[English]

Many of my colleagues today, including the latest one who spoke about the value of peacekeeping, have begun to reflect on just what we should be doing in this instance and as well with respect to peacekeeping.

I was impressed, as I am sure are many of my constituents and constituents throughout Canada, by the recitation of the reasons why we find ourselves today in Bosnia-Herzegovina. One of those reasons of course is that we have established a tradition in this country that accepts a responsibility to contribute to world order, to the establishment of a civilized fashion of government, of the maintenance of peace and the propagation of the concept of law as that which should govern all countries.

One of the colleagues from the Bloc went so far as to say—I do not quote but paraphrase because I was taken by some of the phrases—

[Translation]

Canadians are proud of that work because, in playing that role, Canada has been working towards freedom, towards the achievement of democracy and towards the extending of human rights.

[English]

These are no mean ambitions, no mean objectives and no mean goals for the purposes of our troops both in Bosnia-Herzegovina and elsewhere. In fact those types of goals have made us, in many respects, a leader in establishing not only a philosophy but a mechanism and a role for our armed forces for the world throughout to follow.

For us it has been a pragmatic approach to the limited type of military resources we could bring to any theatre world-wide. It is fair to say that we are not, by any stretch of the imagination, a threat militarily to any country in the world given the number of troops we currently have in our defence structure. However, we have used them intelligently. We have used them for the maintenance of peace. We have used them to teach others how to establish order and how to establish and maintain an approach to conflict resolution that could lead to eventual long-term peace.

Many of my colleagues in this House today and Canadians everywhere seem to be ambivalent simply because none of those ideals, none of those values appear to be as clear as they have been in the past.

My hon. colleague from Sherbrooke talked a few moments ago about all of the valued initiatives of the last decade or so. But they are no longer very clear in the public's mind. Why not? Many of us have witnessed on a daily basis the kinds of repugnant pictures that would suggest we are no longer as

successful as we have been in the past. Perhaps that is what hurts us most.

• (2200)

One of our colleagues earlier indicated that we are revolted by the barbarities, the atrocities, the outright horror, the destruction of all belligerents. No one mentioned the aggressor because one of the weaknesses in discussing peacekeeping in the context of what used to be called Yugoslavia is that there are many belligerents but we have named no aggressor. Consequently when we make comparisons between the set of circumstances in which we have engaged our military forces and those which were engaged in the Gulf war, there is that basic difference, that we have named no aggressor and therefore we have let others dictate our actions on the basis of that vacuum.

Almost on a daily basis we have been reminded that all of our good intentions, all of our resources, the risks that we ask our young men and women to take in a theatre of war or conflict, are producing no results. We are so stunned by that that some members represent the public view that perhaps this is not cost efficient.

My colleague from Hamilton—Wentworth asked a very pertinent question and that is how to measure the cost efficiency of a moral value, of a value that has international application and a value which has a long-term benefit for social order.

Others have indicated that we are absorbing, as we have been in all of our engagements, virtually all of the material costs. Others, our allies, our friends in the UN and NATO have not been so conscientious in following that model.

We seem to be at a loss at what to do because our troops, like some members here—and I do not mean to make light—are cornered, out manoeuvred, by belligerents who have no regard for their goals and their altruistic reason for being in such a locus. Worse, we seem to be manipulated by our own allies who are engaged in an evolution of military tactics just as we are witnessing an evolution of peacemaking and peacekeeping.

While it might appear that I have made a Freudian slip when I say there is an evolution of peacekeeping and peacemaking, in the last House we went into the discussion of peacekeeping in the Gulf war to peacemaking. Our obligations had shifted. The moment we make a definition that is different from the one that had guided until that day virtually all of our interventions in the world theatre, we assumed an entirely different set of obligations, both material, personnel and in outcome.

We have not made a definitive explanation yet of what we mean by peacemaking. If I listen to my constituents, I understand that it is what most of us as Canadians would want most desperately for the people of the Balkans today, that someone would impose peace, would make peace, and then we would voluntarily go in and keep it.