

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, as our leader, the hon. Jean Chrétien, said in a speech a few months ago, we can do far more to upgrade the tools available to the international community to resolve disputes before they degenerate into armed conflict or, if appropriate, to make it possible for parties to reach an agreement without outside intervention. The task was a difficult one during the cold war, but now that east-west tensions have relaxed, there is hope that we can consolidate the institutional framework for international co-operation.

Mr. Chrétien went on to say that we must give the UN some muscle. Canada was the first country to get involved in peacekeeping operations. Our soldiers have taken part in a number of operations and they will continue to do so. It is in our higher interest to use our influence to enhance the capabilities of the United Nations, expand its peacekeeping mandate and make it a forum where all nations will be able to resolve their disputes in an atmosphere of trust.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, in response to the current crisis and in keeping with the founding principles of the United Nations, the Security Council has imposed near airtight sanctions against Iraq. UN member countries are enforcing those sanctions with the help of a broad-based multinational military force.

At this time, we are not convinced that sanctions have failed. On the contrary, as I have said, experts are pointing to increasing evidence of their success.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals believe that instead of rushing into a military offensive, we should maintain and reinforce sanctions to make Saddam Hussein understand that aggression does not pay.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, starting a war is all too easy. Anyone who knows anything about the Middle East knows that finishing a war in that region is going to be exceedingly difficult. The consequences of war will be enormous. We must, therefore, think always of the human cost of waging war.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, with thousands of lives at stake, we must move heaven and earth to find a peaceful solution. Only when we are convinced that all peaceful means of getting Saddam Hussein's troops out of Kuwait have been exhausted, should the United Nations consider further military action.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, in its resolution today the Conservative government is asking Canadians to give it a blank cheque. It is asking for support of a vague motion before this House that may translate into support for any and all future UN resolutions, the exact contents and purposes of which no one can foresee.

In the view of Liberals, the draft Security Council resolution is premature. It is also vague. It authorizes any country individually, on its own, to do anything that country considers right; to use any means it considers necessary to achieve the goals of resolution 660 in this matter anywhere in the region, without any consideration of UN command or accountability.

I say, Mr. Speaker, the comments from the backbenches by the Secretary of State for External Affairs indicates he knows he has a weak case, otherwise he would be sitting and listening, as I did to his speech, even though I had plenty to say about its gaps and weaknesses while he was speaking. His comments show that he knows he and his government are on the wrong track.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

An hon. member: Right on.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, asking this Parliament to endorse the current draft Security Council resolution we believe is asking far too much at this time.

We will not, through supporting this government motion before the House today, give the government a blank cheque for any and all further action regarding the Persian Gulf. I do not think that this is what Canadians expect this House to do.

While I do not rule out the possibility that the United Nations may eventually have to make a decision on the use of force, Liberals do not believe that this point has yet been reached. We believe that the United Nations sanctions must first be given sufficient time to work. Liberals insist that before Canadians are called upon to participate in any offensive action, such participation