



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, January 29, 2003
(Part A)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, January 29, 2003

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will be led by the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

[*Editor's Note: Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

LEBANESE NEW YEAR'S LEVEE

Mr. Shawn Murphy (Hillsborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate all organizers of the annual Lebanese New Year's Levee, which was organized by the Charlottetown Lebanese community and held at the Delta Prince Edward on Saturday, January 11.

The evening's festivities included Lebanese cuisine, Lebanese music, Lebanese dancing and an excellent address on Lebanese culture presented by Dr. Abdallah Obeid, the Director of Arabic Studies at the University of Ottawa.

The event was attended by approximately 500 people, including the Lieutenant Governor of Prince Edward Island, the Premier of Prince Edward Island, and the Mayor of the City of Charlottetown.

The Lebanese have had a long and rich history in the greater Charlottetown area, going back in excess of 100 years. The original immigrants from Lebanon, and their descendants, have contributed much to the culture of the community of Charlottetown and the economy of Prince Edward Island.

On behalf of the House I wish to salute this community and the organizers of this event.

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QUEEN'S JUBILEE MEDAL

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, before the Christmas break I had the honour to present a number of deserving constituents from my riding of Dewdney—Alouette with the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, recognizing their

outstanding achievements, and contribution to our communities and to our country.

The recipients included: Dr. Jack Freeman, Wesley Johnson, Mayor Sylvia Pranger and Ella Pretty from the Agassiz and Harrison Hot Springs area; Linnea Battel, Terry Gidda, Bill Harris, Victor Hollister, Eleanor Lobb and Catherine Marcellus from the Mission area; and Lorraine Bates, Crystal Boser, Tom Cameron, Lola Chapman, Carl Durksen, Bernice Gehring, Chief Peter James, Sheila Nickols, Mike Suddaby and Bonnie Telep from the Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows area.

On behalf of the people of Dewdney—Alouette, we thank each one of them for their endless hours of service that help to make our communities a better place to live.

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[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FRESHWATER

Ms. Yolande Thibeault (Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on December 12, 2002, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2003 as the International Year of Freshwater.

This decision is in keeping with the commitments made by the international community, including Canada, at the 2000 Millennium Summit, and at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. Heads of state from around the world had agreed to halve by 2015 the proportion of people without access to or the means to access safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

If these goals are not reached, fatal diseases will continue to spread and cause devastation, the earth's environment will continue to decay and food security will be compromised, with the risks of instability that can result. Of course, water-related problems are more acute in the developing world, but developed countries are not safe either.

During the International Year of Freshwater, I am convinced that Canada will do its part to protect the planet's precious freshwater resources, which are essential to our survival and to sustainable development in the 21st century.

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• (1405)

[*English*]

PETER GZOWSKI INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that CBC Radio has honoured the memory of Peter Gzowski by establishing the Peter Gzowski internships. Peter was chancellor of Trent University.

The internships will provide training in broadcast opportunities for final year students at Trent University in Peterborough, Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Memorial University in St. John's, and McGill University in Montreal.

Peter would have greatly appreciated a memorial of this type, which will open the doors of his profession for young people. Students interested in the Peter Gzowski internship program should contact one of the universities mentioned or visit the website at www.cbc.ca/gzowskiinternships.

* * *

SAMUEL CLARK

Mr. Andy Savoy (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, on behalf of the Minister of Veterans Affairs, I had the privilege of presenting the minister's commendation to a most distinguished veteran of the second world war, Mr. Samuel Ervin Clark, a resident of Woodstock, New Brunswick.

Mr. Clark served overseas with the 1st Canadian Division. Beyond his dedicated service to his country, Mr. Clark chose to continue to contribute to the cause of veterans and to their community ever since his return from the war and throughout his golden years.

Mr. Clark is an outstanding example of someone who has devoted much of his life to the well-being of others. Though legally blind Mr. Clark has been managing the Woodstock Veterans Home for 39 years without any remuneration. His dedication to his fellow veterans and their families bears witness to a lifetime commitment to comrades in need and to his remarkable generosity of spirit.

Mr. Clark is most worthy of this honour. His continued efforts to assist veterans have set an example for all Canadians. It is my pleasure to recognize him for serving his country and his community with such devotion.

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[*Translation*]

MEMBER FOR LASALLE—ÉMARD

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the member for LaSalle—Émard sees himself as the next Prime Minister. He wanted to participate in the debate on the bill to reform rules on financing of political parties.

However, he condemned the Bloc Québécois in English in the *National Post* while supporting its political legitimacy in French on CKAC radio in Montreal. I think that, for Canadians and Quebecers, a bilingual message is the same in French and English,

and not two conflicting messages, like those we heard from the former Minister of Finance.

[*English*]

The member for LaSalle—Émard sees himself as our next Prime Minister so he wants to talk about the campaign finance bill. But he denounced the political legitimacy of the Bloc Québécois in English to the *National Post* while supporting its legitimacy on Montreal's French language CKAC radio.

For me a real bilingual message is the same in both official languages. National leadership demands consistent national messages in both official languages like this statement, and not the language games played by the former Liberal finance minister.

* * *

FILM INDUSTRY

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year the Canadian film industry accounted for over \$5 billion in revenue and 134,000 jobs. In British Columbia alone this meant an economic impact of \$2.8 billion and 25,000 jobs, ranking B.C. third in production after L.A. and New York.

Today, this industry faces a crisis that put 50% of film union members out of work in B.C. The cause? Primarily the loss of the foreign film investment deferral and an inadequate tax credit replacement. At the same time Australia and Ireland have created enhanced tax incentives for which even our own low Canadian dollar cannot compensate. The industry has been working on practical solutions which are before the Minister of Finance.

I urge our federal government to put in place the long term tax incentives that will improve Canada's competitiveness in this very mobile but important international industry.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LAFARGE CANADA

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the managers at Lafarge Canada in my riding on receiving, jointly with Longueuil, an innovation award at the 12th Annual Technology Awards Gala of the Association de recherche industrielle du Québec.

Lafarge Canada developed a new method involving the use of ash from incinerated wastewater sludge in an industrial cement powder production process.

Through this innovation, more than 10,000 tonnes of ash can be recycled, which will result in savings of \$150,000 over this three-year project.

This innovation by Lafarge, located in Saint-Constant, provides a clean solution for the ash residue from the incineration of sludge at wastewater treatment plants.

We believe this new technology from Quebec will soon be used around the world.

• (1410)

[English]

ORDER OF CANADA

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the four Nunavummiut just awarded the Order of Canada.

Zacharias Kunuk of Igloolik is honoured for his outstanding work in preserving Inuit culture and tradition, and sharing it with the world. His film *Atanarjuat* is an international success.

Tagak Curley of Rankin Inlet, founding president of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, now known as Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and negotiator of the Nunavut land claim, is honoured for his dedication to the economic and political development of the north.

Helen Maksagak of Cambridge Bay is honoured for her community work. As Commissioner of the Northwest Territories and then of Nunavut, Helen performed her official duties with grace and dignity.

Elisapee Ootova of Pond Inlet created an Inuktitut dictionary and co-authored an encyclopedia of Inuit traditional knowledge.

All four have made the world a better place and are role models for all of us.

* * *

BRIAN BAKER

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to start this year off by paying tribute to a real hero from my riding of Wild Rose. Brian Michael Baker received the Medal of Bravery from the Governor General on December 9, 2002, due to his efforts on November 4, 2000, when he was struck by a car while escorting a woman to her stranded vehicle during a blinding snowstorm in Crossfield, Alberta.

When the tow truck arrived to pull the woman's car away from the median, Mr. Baker volunteered to escort her from his rescue van at the side of the four lane highway back to her abandoned vehicle. With visibility hampered by the blizzard he feared for the woman's safety and instructed her to hold on to his arm.

They were halfway across the road when they found themselves directly in the path of a car travelling through the snow squall at excessive speed for the road conditions. Without hesitation and regard for his own safety, Mr. Baker pushed the woman out of harm's way. In a split second he took the full impact and was thrown several metres. As a result of his valiant efforts Mr. Baker suffered multiple serious injuries.

* * *

[Translation]

LITERACY

Mr. Claude Duplain (Portneuf, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to highlight the participation of Human Resources Development Canada's National Literacy Secretariat in the implementation of three projects in the very beautiful riding of Charlevoix.

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In Baie-Saint-Paul, the Charlevoix literacy training service will receive \$20,000 to develop an information kit on social intervention for staff who work with students who suffer from psychosocial problems.

In Forestville, Plaisir de lire will receive \$18,000 to launch a literacy awareness campaign on the North Shore.

In Baie-Comeau, the Maison Alpha ABC Côte-Nord will receive \$9,518 to prepare audio report cards for parents who are functionally illiterate.

These three examples demonstrate the determination of the Government of Canada to give all our fellow citizens the tools to full realize their abilities.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last night I and many Canadians watched in horror as George Bush made clear his intention to wage war on the people of Iraq. At the same time he announced that the U.S. is pushing ahead with a dangerous new star wars missile defence system.

Today we learned that the Liberal government is sending officials to the United States this week to look at a possible role for Canada in this dangerous scheme. Will the Liberals really let George Bush put nuclear weapons on Canadian territory as part of this dangerous scheme?

It is time the Liberal government finally took a stand on these two grave threats to world peace. The Liberal foreign minister meets tomorrow with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell. I urge him to give a loud and clear message from the people of Canada that Canada will not participate in a war on the people of Iraq under any circumstances, and Canada will have nothing to do with the U.S. missile defence scheme. No contracts and no missile sites.

Finally, MPs should be allowed to have a vote, not a debate but a vote, on this most fundamental of issues.

* * *

[Translation]

ST. LAWRENCE PILOTS

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to a group of real professionals, the pilots of the St. Lawrence River.

The importance of the role played by the St. Lawrence pilots is indisputable. Thanks to their mastery of the specifics of the St. Lawrence, many disasters—environmental, economic and social—have been avoided.

The forefathers of today's St. Lawrence pilots often exposed themselves to great risks in exploring its various bays. The narrow waters of our river, where ships are subjected to constantly changing constraints and natural conditions, absolutely require the presence of these navigational professionals.

Oral Questions

They have at last been officially recognized by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, and will now be commemorated by a plaque in the Musée de la mer, at the Pointe-au-Père lighthouse, in the Lower St. Lawrence.

The Bloc Québécois joins with me in expressing, on behalf of all Quebecers, our most sincere gratitude for the excellent work that has been done and continues to be done by our St. Lawrence pilots. Imagine how many nautical miles have been navigated since the time of Abraham Martin, in 1634.

* * *

•(1415)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more than a hundred mayors, municipal councillors and economic development officers from the Eastern Townships and the Montérégie are in Ottawa today to attend a seminar organized by my colleague, the member for Brome—Missisquoi.

They are taking part in information sessions on subjects relating to government programs. I thank them for responding to this invitation in such large numbers.

Their presence confirms their concerns and interest in developing new tools and opportunities for their cities or areas.

The information they will receive today will certainly be of use to businesses and organizations in a number of municipalities.

In closing, I extend my greetings to the mayors and councillors from the riding of Shefford, as well as those from surrounding ridings. I hope they will have a profitable day and thank them for their support and excellent cooperation.

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[English]

NATIONAL DRINKING WATER STANDARDS

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is essentially the only industrialized country without national drinking water standards. Two years have passed since the majority of members of the House supported a Progressive Conservative motion to ensure that Canada has national, enforceable drinking water standards enshrined in a safe water act.

Two years have come and gone since the Liberal government promised to act on enforcing safe drinking water standards. Today I will introduce a private member's bill that provides for the establishment of national standards for safe drinking water. In a letter received from the Minister of Health in September, she stated that the responsibility for drinking water does not rest solely in the hands of the federal government.

We agree, however the Canadian Water and Wastewater Association believes strongly, as Canadians do, that the federal government has an important and critical role in the preservation of safe drinking water across the country. Even the Minister of Health must believe this as well.

Provincial and territorial jurisdiction must be recognized and this is done in this private member's bill. We need to have standards for

safe drinking water that are legislated and made legally binding. Let this bill serve as a catalyst, a reminder for us to—

* * *

REPORT OF THE PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: Order, please. I have the honour to lay upon the table the 2001-02 report of the privacy commissioner.

[Translation]

This report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

IRAQ

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in 1998 the Prime Minister said:

Make no mistake, Saddam's behaviour to date indicates that he will not honour diplomatic solutions so long as they are not accompanied by a threat of intervention. The least sign of weakness or hesitation on our part will be interpreted as incitement...We believe that Canada cannot stand on the sidelines in such a moment...Canada will be counted.

Does the Prime Minister still hold to this opinion?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Speaker, and it is why we were asking from the beginning that there would be a very clear resolution at the Security Council. That became 1441. It is very clear that if he does not oblige and abide by the rules of the Security Council Saddam Hussein will face very severe consequences for his misjudgment.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let me return to the Prime Minister's quote. He said:

The least sign of weakness or hesitation...will be interpreted as incitement.

The Prime Minister himself and his government have been waffling consistently on what to do in the past few weeks. He said:

We believe that Canada cannot stand on the sidelines in such a moment...Canada will be counted.

What precisely is the government doing and what is the Prime Minister doing to send the message that Canada is determined and will be counted and act with its allies?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working for a long time to make sure that the United Nations will give the message to Saddam Hussein. We have worked to have a resolution so that the people of the world will be together in telling Saddam Hussein that he has to disarm.

The goal is to disarm Saddam Hussein. We are all united in the United Nations to ask him to do that. Otherwise he will have to pay the price.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let me go to a more precise question.

Both Australia and Great Britain have stated that Saddam Hussein is in material breach of United Nations resolution 1441. As well, evidence is mounting that Saddam is blocking the work of the UN inspectors team as required by the resolution. It states that without compliance there will be severe consequences.

Does the Prime Minister today believe that Saddam Hussein is or is not in compliance with resolution 1441?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two elements that are very important to keep in mind. The President of the United States yesterday said that next week on the fifth, Wednesday, Mr. Powell will be in front of the Security Council and he will table evidence. We are waiting to see what is that proof, and if they have it, good. It will be good for the people to know. As well, there is Mr. Blix, who will make another report on February 14.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): That is another non-response, Mr. Speaker.

The allied forces have stated with good reason and with good evidence that they do not believe Saddam Hussein is complying with the United Nations. This multilateral coalition of nations is determined to increase the pressure on Saddam Hussein to respect the United Nations. They are deploying military forces to the region. Great Britain, Australia, the Czech Republic, the United States and others believe pre-deployment is important to ensure Saddam's compliance.

Why does the Prime Minister not agree with our allies?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Because, Mr. Speaker, we have a very clear policy. We have said that we have to follow the process of the Security Council and the United Nations. We were the first ones to start to ask about it and we are following à la lettre, as we say in French, the process. The process will be the testimony of Mr. Powell next week and the second report of Mr. Blix, and we will advise when we have these two testimonies.

[Translation]

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, he did not answer my question. Allied forces, such as Great Britain, Australia, Czechoslovakia and others do not believe that Saddam Hussein is complying with the UN process. This multilateral coalition of countries is determined to intensify pressure on Saddam Hussein in order to force him to respect the UN and, maybe, avoid war.

Why does the Prime Minister not agree with our allies?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is because we believe that the unity of the Security Council is vital. We are seeing that the process works.

I am very happy that the President of the United States said there is tangible evidence and that he will present it to the Security Council next week. This is where the case must be proven. Then, Mr. Blix will submit his report. By February 14, we will know what we are dealing with. This is what we said last summer, and we are following it to the letter.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his state of the union address last night, President Bush

Oral Questions

underscored that when it comes time to attack Iraq, and I quote, “the course of this nation does not depend on the decisions of others”.

Will the Prime Minister tell us if he, too, is ready to go to war against Iraq, regardless of what the UN Security Council decides?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have said from the outset that the process must take place in the Security Council and in compliance with the Security Council's resolution.

We are waiting to see what the Security council will say following the appearance of Mr. Powell and Mr. Blix on February 5 and 14.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is feigning ignorance of the current situation. France and Germany have both said that a second resolution is required, that they may exercise their veto power.

The Prime Minister has just told us that the unity of the Security Council is vital. If it is indeed so vital, can he tell us, if the Security Council is not unanimous, if the Security Council does not authorize military intervention in Iraq, will he stand with the United States and thumb his nose at the rest of the world? People have a right to know what Canada's position is.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our position is very clear. We are waiting for the conclusions of the Security Council. We are not coming to our own conclusions, we are not taking any hypothetical positions.

We called for a process. We want this process to be followed by everyone, and once the process is completed, we will hear what the Security Council has to say and we will act freely, as an independent country.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, clearly the U.S. President feels he has all the evidence he needs to launch an offensive against Iraq and has no intention of holding back because of the UN Security Council. This he made quite clear in his statement yesterday.

Does the Prime Minister of Canada not understand that, by his attitude, his unwillingness to be clearer on the Canadian position, he is undermining the role of the UN Security Council, perhaps our last hope to avert war in Iraq?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by asking everyone to follow the UN process, we are helping the UN Security Council. If everyone takes a different position, that weakens the Security Council.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are currently two attitudes toward the issue of Iraq: there are those who consider that the matter of war and peace is too important to be left in the hands of a single nation and that it should be put in the hands of the UN instead, and there are those who think that the U.S. can do as it pleases.

Does the Prime Minister not realize that, by not taking a clear, straightforward position in favour of a second Security Council resolution, he is siding with those who are leaving it up to the Americans, which does nothing to help the United Nations?

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Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the umpteenth time, I will repeat that our policy is to follow the UN process and that we are waiting for the two reports, which are scheduled to be tabled before the Security Council on February 5 and 14 respectively. After the Security Council has made a decision, we will make our own. It cannot be the other way around; we have to follow the process.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Last night the President of the United States made it very clear that America intends to proceed, with or without UN approval.

Does the Prime Minister agree with President Bush that the Americans have the right to put together this coalition of the willing, with or without United Nations approval? Would he assure us that if the Americans do act without UN approval we will not be among the willing?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the NDP members should not participate very seriously in that debate because they have already said that even if the United Nations authorizes action they would not be there. So they should not participate. They are already out of the arena, but for us, we think it is a very serious problem. We want the nations to be together. We want Saddam Hussein to know that the United Nations is demanding once more for him to disarm, and of course if he refuses to disarm, he will have to face some very severe consequences.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at least we are prepared to answer difficult questions even if the Prime Minister does not like our answers, which is more than we can say for him on the floor of the House.

I ask him again, does he agree with President Bush that he has the right to pursue war on Iraq without UN approval? Might I also ask, given his respect for process, will he say to the House once more why it is that he will not allow his own members to have a choice with respect to whether or not Canada goes to war on Iraq?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a very clear position. We intend to respect the resolution of the Security Council. Already the NDP would not respect the decision of the United Nations if it is not the one it wants. For us, we respect this institution, the United Nations, and it is the best guardian we have against war.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow Prime Minister Tony Blair heads back to Camp David to make Britain's case to President Bush on Iraq.

My question is for the Prime Minister. When is he going to Camp David?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States does not need to consult me today. He has known since the month of August what the position of Canada is. We have always been very clear.

Yes, I have talked with Mr. Blair many times. In October when I was in Africa I said to Mr. Blair that the best solution for him, as for everybody, was to have a resolution of the UN—

• (1430)

The Speaker: The right hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, when I asked yesterday about rules of engagement for Canadian Forces in Iraq, the hypothetical minister of defence said, who knows?

There are 54 members of the Canadian Forces in an exchange program with Britain, some of them playing key leadership roles in divisions ordered to the gulf. Canadian Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Scantland said those officers have been given “blanket authority” to deploy.

Is the minister saying there are no rules of engagement for these Canadian soldiers in the gulf, poised for combat, or was he misinforming the House yesterday?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was not misinforming the House in the least. The right hon. member asked about rules of engagement for a hypothetical Canadian contribution to a hypothetical war. With those two hypotheticals, there are no rules of engagement.

Canadian troops that are currently operating in the region have very well defined, very clear rules of engagement, but it would not be in the interests of national security for me to reveal those rules of engagement to the general public.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Saddam Hussein certainly is not hypothetical, and the trouble he has caused is not either. This Liberal government sticks its head in the sand when it should draw a line in the sand regarding Saddam Hussein. He responds only when faced with the threat of grave military consequences.

If we want a peaceful solution, Canada must be proactive and help build international pressure for Saddam to disarm. We are running out of time to take that stand.

Why is the government shirking its responsibility to help our allies prevent war?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we have done nothing but push our allies in the direction of making sure that we are strengthening the single most important institution that will be the bulwark for world peace for generations to come, and that is the United Nations Security Council, which the Prime Minister has been supporting since August when he spoke to President Bush. It has been our consistent policy. There is nothing on this side of the House except that which we can take pride in, guaranteeing the preservation and in fact the strengthening of international institutions for the benefit of all the world.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, except for those who go on private visits and say how charming they are.

A coalition of nations is already sending troops to the Persian Gulf region to pressure Saddam Hussein to comply with UN resolution 1441. Canada is conspicuous by its absence. Once again the government gets on the fence when it could take concrete action to help reach a peaceful solution.

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Again the question is, and we need an answer, when will the government join our allies to pre-deploy forces to prevent a war?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday when asked about the issue of military deployment in the Persian Gulf the Leader of the Opposition said “Well, you cross these bridges when you come to them”.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when we voted on the Kyoto protocol, the Prime Minister said that it was a vote that would be binding on the government. He made a similar statement regarding his party financing legislation.

Does the Prime Minister agree that sending troops to war is an equally important issue and that, as such, it deserves to be dealt with in the same fashion as Kyoto, that is by having a vote in the House that will be binding on the government?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unless I am mistaken, that question was put yesterday by a colleague of the hon. member. Surely she must know, since she is a member of this House, what the rules are regarding such debates. These rules were established a long time ago. Incidentally, there will be such a debate this evening, and there may be more in the future, given the degree of interest generated by this issue. The way to proceed is determined by the parliamentary rules under which this House operates.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government House leader himself must know that when he was sitting on the opposition benches, the Liberals were demanding that the sending of troops to war be approved by a vote in Parliament. However, these same Liberals changed that tradition when they took office, in 1993.

How can the Prime Minister now justify such an about-face?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no about-face. Before this government took office, there was no standard system for such debates.

We have established a rule and abided by it every time. Even during parliamentary recesses, I personally contacted the House leader of the hon. member's party to have the committees meet and thus have a forum to debate the issue of troop deployment. We did it every time. The hon. member must surely know that; if not, her House leader certainly does.

* * *

• (1435)

[English]

CANADA POST

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, to most Canadians, Canada Post sells stamps and delivers the mail. To courier companies in Canada, it has another role. It has become a Liberally connected monopoly using its market dominance to stamp them out of business.

The couriers charge that Canada Post's new partner, Intelcom, run by Liberal Party fundraisers, is using insider knowledge and strong arm tactics to capture business from Canada Post suppliers.

Will the minister responsible investigate these questionable tactics or does he believe that Canada Post has the mandate to bankrupt these other couriers?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am one step ahead of the hon. member. When the report was published in the newspaper around Christmas I asked my officials what the truth was of this.

The fact is this was a commercial arrangement that was sanctioned by the board of Canada Post. It will stand the light of scrutiny. There is no intention whatsoever to do anything nefarious to other companies. It is simply a matter of having a competitive process and following all the rules.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there you have it, more Liberal bulwark.

It is no accident that Canada Post, without notice, chose to purchase that particular courier company. Intelcom was owned by Liberal Party fundraisers connected to André Ouellet, a former Liberal cabinet minister and now Canada Post president, and the present justice minister who is the political minister for Quebec.

Is Canada Post's mandate to deliver the mail or deliver these lucrative opportunities to Liberal Party hacks? Which is it?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is bordering on innuendo here in the House of Commons, slurring the reputation of an honourable person, someone who sat in the House for many years, someone who is doing an outstanding job with the post office and leading it to profitability.

We have the best post office in the world. The Hon. André Ouellet, the president, is leading us to widespread recognition around the world for his good management.

* * *

[Translation]

GASOLINE TAX

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since 1995, the federal government has collected a special tax of 1.5¢ per litre of gas, supposedly to help reduce the deficit, even if there has not been a deficit since 1998.

Given that there has not been a deficit since 1998, can the Minister of Finance tell us how the \$740 million that he took from Quebec drivers was used?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, eliminating the deficit is a terrific achievement for us. We are now in a position to reduce taxes, not only for drivers, but for all Canadian taxpayers. As a result, we have cut taxes by \$100 billion over five years.

Oral Questions

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing funny about taxes. The minister can try to excuse his actions, but he is not convincing.

Given that he has reached his objective and has had a zero deficit since 1998, would the Minister of Finance be willing to consider the suggestion of the Quebec minister of transportation, which is to repatriate the gasoline tax revenues to the provinces to fund public transit?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the provinces really like the tax points, but sometimes, they forget about them. They really like them because they want us to impose the taxes and then let them spend the money.

As far as I am concerned, the Quebec minister of finance is capable of imposing a tax if he so wishes.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the President of the Treasury Board about the low ethical standards for claiming business expenses when travelling.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage has claimed about \$80,000, which she calls just other expenses, with no receipts attached.

The Prime Minister defended these practices by saying that they fall within Treasury Board guidelines. Which guidelines allow ministers to be paid without receipts?

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ministers of the government have been filing their expense claims the same way for more than 30 years. They have to sign an official statement in which they declare the expenses they have incurred on trips they have made, the duration of the trip, the destination and the lodging and meal expenses.

This is an official statement signed by the minister that is accessible under the Access to Information Act.

• (1440)

[English]

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in an atmosphere of questionable cabinet ethics, it is incredible that under Treasury Board rules ministers do not have to submit receipts for expense claims. In fact, the Auditor General is also opposed to the practice.

What is required of average taxpayers should be required of ministers. It is very simple.

Will the President of the Treasury Board take the responsibility of this ethical lapse, this privileged status for ministers over there, and require receipts for all claimed expenses?

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, each minister who has to claim expenses must

make an official statement. It is their name, their word on this document, stating that they incurred expenses on trips for lodging and meals.

This official document signed by the minister is even accessible. It can be provided to anyone who asks for it under the Access to Information Act.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AID

Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Cooperation.

There are more than 11 million Ethiopians in need of humanitarian assistance today and another 3 million need to be closely monitored. No one wants a repeat of the 1984 tragedy when mass starvation caused widespread suffering and death in Ethiopia.

Could the minister inform the House how the Government of Canada through CIDA is responding to this emergency?

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during my recent trip to Ethiopia I witnessed the effects of drought firsthand and had a chance to speak with some of the local people who are benefiting from Canada directly.

On January 16 the Government of Canada announced an additional \$40 million in emergency assistance. Assistance will be delivered in partnership with the World Food Program, the Canada Food Grains Bank and other NGOs which will bring our total contribution to \$47 million since September.

Canadians are providing a leadership role in dealing with the drought and the famine in Ethiopia. We will continue to monitor the situation very closely.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month the Minister of the Environment had a discussion with the head of the United States Environmental Protection Agency over the loosening of some EPA regulations for 18,000 coal fired power plants and said that it would not have an impact on air quality in Canada.

In the context of the fact that we have 5,000 deaths that are air pollution related and in the context that a great deal of that air pollution from the United States ends up in southern Canada, and in particular in my home city of Windsor, is the minister really serious? Does he believe that by loosening those regulations that—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of the Environment.

Oral Questions

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we certainly agree with the hon. member that the issue of air quality is particularly important and, of course, as he pointed out, to achieve improvements on the quality of air that comes from the United States we have to work with the United States.

As to specific concerns, I would bring to his attention, with respect to phase two of the 2018 timeframe, we are concerned about changes in particulate matter in ozone. We also are concerned about mercury levels. We will be working with the Americans to make sure these specific concerns about specific pollutants that kill—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

* * *

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, why is that after three years and \$300 million to solve homelessness we still have a national disaster and no social housing? Why is it that a baby is born on cold concrete steps in the middle of winter because there is no safe housing for women and kids? Why is it that life on minimum wage means poverty and despair?

Quality of life and human dignity used to mean something in this country. Why have the Liberals abandoned this? What does the Prime Minister say to these Canadians who are still out in the cold, still homeless and still poor?

Hon. Claudette Bradshaw (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, community organizations across the country have worked on the homelessness file. I have to say that we have gone away from shelter beds and into transitional housing.

As for housing, since we have travelled on the homelessness file, the government has put \$680 million into housing. The provinces are spending that money as we speak. A lot of work still needs to be done but through our partnerships with the provincial governments, the municipalities and the communities we are making a difference in the country.

* * *

•(1445)

IRAQ

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, following the tabling of the Blix report before the United Nations Security Council on Monday, the United States concluded that Iraq was in material breach of resolution 1441.

Then, Britain and Australia concurred. On the other hand, France and Germany argued that more time was needed. What is Canada's position?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has answered that clearly in the House three times today already.

We know that Colin Powell will be going to the Security Council on February 5. We know that Dr. Blix will be reporting back to the Security Council on February 14.

I had a long conversation with Dr. Blix yesterday. We are constantly consulting with our allies and United Nations officials to

ensure that resolution 1441 and the processes laid out in that resolution are followed in a way that will ensure the disarmament of Iraq on the one hand and the peace and security of the world on the other hand.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in *Hansard* the Minister of National Defence said that it would be very difficult to know what the rules of engagement would be.

Today he said that there are rules of engagement for the Canadians involved with the British in the gulf but that they are so secret he cannot reveal them.

Are these rules of engagement Canadian rules? Are they British rules? Are they American rules? Or, does the minister know?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fail to understand the question. I thought I answered it clearly the last time.

What I said and what I will repeat is that for a hypothetical unknown case that may or may not occur in the future, obviously we do not have rules of engagement.

For the Canadians who are there today in Canadian vessels, we have rules of engagement, which I cannot reveal, but quite clearly they are Canadian rules of engagement that are used by the Canadian Forces.

* * *

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Larry Spencer (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, retroactive GIS payments are supposed to be limited to an 11 month period.

In August 1999, a claimant received a cheque for over \$20,000 covering a period of over five years. The minister of HRDC had previously denied the claim. The OAS review tribunal denied the appeal and ruled in favour of the minister.

What mock parliamentary authority was used to justify the cheque?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should understand that where administrative errors are made the minister has the authority to make retroactive payments. That is the case in this regard and it is an appropriate way of managing the file.

Mr. Larry Spencer (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, neither the minister nor the bureaucracy should be able to override the OAS review tribunal and cut cheques for tens of thousands of dollars on a whim.

I have written to the Auditor General today asking her to look into this matter. Will the human resources minister also investigate this issue and report back to the House with a full explanation of why her department broke the rules by arbitrarily cutting a cheque for over \$20,000?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me repeat that as far as the system that is in place, there is a one year retroactivity provision for most guaranteed income supplement reviews.

Oral Questions

I think the hon. member would accept that where there are administrative errors, we do have to respond to individual Canadians appropriately. That is part of the process and I for one believe it is the right process.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Department of National Defence has decided to close the dimensional metrology reference laboratory in Quebec City, thereby depriving the area of high calibre expertise and knowledge. DND consulted no one except the member for Louis-Hébert, who did nothing.

I am asking the Minister of National Defence why a laboratory was closed when it was working very well?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not have a detailed response for the hon. member at this time, but I will obtain one and get back to her tomorrow.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would also ask the Minister of National Defence whether he intends to treat the area properly and whether he will suspend his decision and carry out a proper consultation of the Quebec City scientific and political community, which is greatly concerned about this.

• (1450)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the importance of the matter and of the area, and will do my best to obtain an answer very promptly.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the federal government says it is only willing to consider new funding for three health priority areas. The provinces, the people who deliver health care, have identified eight priority areas, eight areas that need a total of \$5.4 billion.

Why is the government only willing to consider new money for some provincial priorities?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, provincial and territorial health ministers and I met in early December and we did identify key priorities.

If the hon. member took the time to read the draft accord presented to provincial and territorial premiers by the Government of Canada, she would find that all eight of those priorities are mentioned somewhere in that accord.

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the provinces are asking for \$5.4 billion of funding. The minister is ignoring priority areas identified by the provinces.

The government should negotiate agreements to ensure any new money goes to provincial priorities.

Why can the government not provide the provinces with their priority funding?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, actually I would be very interested in having the hon. member, either this afternoon or at another time, identify for me any of the provincial and territorial priority areas that are not addressed in one way or another in our proposed accord.

I reiterate, I do believe that the priorities my provincial and territorial colleagues and I discussed in early December are all in one way or another addressed in our draft accord.

* * *

[Translation]

FRENCH IN INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for the Francophonie.

It has been noted that French is being used less and less in international institutions. Could the minister tell us what he plans on doing to promote the use of French in international institutions?

Hon. Denis Paradis (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa) (Francophonie), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada actively promotes the use of French in international organizations. During the Francophone Summit in Beirut and the last ministerial conference in Lausanne, I announced that Canada would be providing \$500,000 to promote the use of French in international organizations in New York and Washington, more specifically at the UN and the Organization of American States.

In the very near future, we will be asking Canadian companies if they are interested in this initiative.

* * *

[English]

INDUSTRY

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry should be aware that the marketplace, free of political control, is the best way to deliver high speed or broadband Internet access to rural communities.

Political control of the Internet has failed. Why does the minister believe that if business cannot provide a service, the taxpayers can?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just last year we allocated \$105 million to communities across the country asking them to work together and with the private sector to come forward with plans to make broadband access available in those communities.

We understand that public-private relationship is the best way of proceeding. We are taking advantage of that relationship in making this important service available to Canadians across the country.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let us hope the minister was not using gun registry math to do his calculations.

Oral Questions

Funding business plans that cannot be implemented is another waste of taxpayers' dollars. Many communities were missed in last Friday's announcement. His announcement had more to do with pork barrel politics than providing Internet service to Canadians.

Instead of another Liberal spending spree using taxpayers' dollars, why does the government not simply eliminate the capital tax altogether?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member just has it wrong. The rural communities, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and small cities throughout the country welcomed this opportunity to work with Internet service providers and with business interests to make these services available.

What we are doing is enabling these small communities to make proposals that will allow them access to e-health, e-commerce for their small businesses, and distance education. The member should realize this is a way of opening up opportunities to rural Canada.

* * *

• (1455)

[Translation]

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that concerns all the members from Haut-Richelieu and Brome—Missisquoi is Highway 35.

The Minister of International Trade and the former Minister of Finance, during a visit to Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, both maintained that the funds were available under the Border Infrastructure Fund. The Quebec government is willing to fund 50% of the project.

What is preventing the minister responsible for infrastructure from signing the protocol with Quebec, putting the money on the table and keeping his government's commitments?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, Quebec still has not signed the agreement on provincial bridges and roads, unlike the other provinces. We are willing to sign the agreement and to consider investing in any highway.

* * *

[English]

SPECIES AT RISK

Mr. Andy Savoy (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the species at risk act received royal assent in December.

Would the Minister of Environment please inform the chamber as to when the act will come into force and what the government is doing to support stewardship, the protection of species at risk and their critical habitat?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can inform the hon. member that we expect proclamation in June. I thank him for his support on this legislation.

In the meantime, we will be working under the stewardship programs of the act and under the money made available by the Minister of Finance in past budgets on the issue of stewardship throughout, with the provinces, territories and with landowners.

Finally, if there is need for further information sessions, we will arrange those before June.

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Parliament continues to be kept in the dark about the costs of the gun registry. Maybe the public accounts committee will shed some much needed light on the subject.

Could the chairman of the public accounts committee provide Parliament and Canadians with a status report of its upcoming review of the federal firearms fiasco?

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his excellent question.

The public accounts committee will begin hearings on February 24 into the Canadian firearms program. We will start by calling the following witnesses: the Auditor General, the Minister of Justice, the Deputy Minister of Justice, the President of the Treasury Board and the current and former CEOs of the Canada firearms program.

Let me be clear. Parliament has a responsibility to investigate this billion dollar boondoggle to the fullest on behalf of all Canadian taxpayers to find out how the program could have spiralled so far out of control.

* * *

[Translation]

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in connection with the seniors who were deprived of the Guaranteed Income Supplement, two officials from the Department of Human Resources Development Canada told us in committee that if those seniors managed to live without the Guaranteed Income Supplement, this proves that they did not need this last resort assistance.

I would like the Minister of Human Resources Development to tell us if the statements made by these two officials reflect her department's official position?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the official position of the department and the government is that the guaranteed annual income supplement is a very important addition to the pension structure in Canada.

The guaranteed income supplement is there to help seniors with their immediate needs. We know that by providing this along with other pension programs in Canada, we have one of the best support systems for Canadian seniors in the world.

Privilege

● (1500)

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we already know from the heritage minister that Kyoto was delayed because of the influence of big money. We are now reading that Liberal MPs, including cabinet ministers, are shovelling money into secret trust accounts.

My question for the government is, what assurances are there that these political pork barrels will be dismantled and disallowed under amendments to the Canada Elections Act?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is in breach of an agreement that he made earlier today to participate in an in camera briefing on the bill and has now revealed it before the House before the bill was introduced.

Some hon. members: Shame.

The Speaker: Order. We have moved on to the next question. The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester has the floor.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, on December 23 the Minister for International Trade issued a press release saying, “The government of Canada announces \$15 million of support for Canadian softwood lumber associations”.

The press release implies support for associations in all regions of Canada. Are there any regions of Canada that will not receive one single cent of this support money?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear that indeed we are supporting the softwood lumber industry across the country because we are going through a very difficult time with the punitive measures that the Americans are taking.

As Atlantic Canada is not affected by the countervailing duties, the Maritime Lumber Bureau has asked not to receive that assistance from the Government of Canada, not to be rolled into the American action. It is at their request that they are not receiving any money, but we stand by the rest of Canada because softwood lumber is a top priority for the government.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of all hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Heather Forsythe, Solicitor General for Alberta.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt.

PRIVILEGE

PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 48, and with regard to my prior notice, I rise on a question of privilege. The incident at issue, which had the effect of impeding and obstructing my duties as a parliamentarian, occurred during the parliamentary recess and resulted in a contempt of the House of Commons.

As a result of the recess, I am bringing this matter to your attention at the earliest possible opportunity, since the House only resumed this week.

In dealing with the charge of contempt I am bringing to your attention, it is essential for you, Mr. Speaker, and all members to understand that contempt as opposed to privilege cannot be enumerated or categorized.

It is on that very point that I refer to an October 29, 1980, ruling by Speaker Sauvé who stated:

—while our privileges are defined, contempt of the House has no limits.

She also said:

When new ways are found to interfere with our proceedings, so too will the House, in appropriate cases, be able to find that a contempt of the House has occurred.

That sentiment was duly reiterated by Speakers Fraser and Parent in their rulings made respectively on October 10, 1989 and October 9, 1997. Those rulings concerned contempt of the House where no precedent existed and for proceedings that had not been envisioned.

Those rulings are significant because the contempt I am highlighting is similar in that it is somewhat unprecedented.

In Marleau and Montpetit, 2000 edition, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, it states, at page 50, that:

“Parliamentary privilege” refers more appropriately to the rights and immunities that are deemed necessary for the House of Commons, as an institution, and its Members, as representatives of the electorate, to fulfil their functions. It also refers to the powers possessed by the House to protect itself, its Members, and its procedures from undue interference, so that it can effectively carry out its principal functions which are to inquire, to debate, and to legislate.

It is in respect of exercising my rights of inquiry as a parliamentarian that I was unduly interfered with by certain individuals within various government departments.

Specifically, on December 27, 2002, and from January 2 through January 6, 2003, I made inquiries with public servants about the discriminatory effects that the government's bilingualism scheme had on anglophones seeking employment and promotion within the federal public service. In both cases my parliamentary e-mail account was used to communicate proceedings of the House with public servants.

The information provided to civil servants on December 27, 2002, was taken directly from *Hansard* and contains my intervention and that of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury Board Minister during the adjournment proceedings of December 4, 2002. This information was communicated as a public service, to provide information about government policy debated in Parliament.

From January 3 until January 6, 2003, and in the absence of any effort by the federal government or unions to consult public service workers, I inquired and surveyed public servants about the extent to which discriminatory bilingualism has impacted and obstructed their careers.

At this point, I would like to reiterate my reference to Marleau and Montpetit and their emphasis on what constitutes parliamentary privilege in respect of protecting members from undue interference in the course of their duties.

Further to this point, I also refer to a ruling on a question of privilege by Speaker Francis, February 20, 1984, which established that efforts by a public servant to withhold co-operation from a member constitutes a prima facie question of privilege.

In regard to the December 27, 2002 e-mail, on January 4, 2003, an employee of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Peter Paton, directed employees in the department to not reply and to delete the e-mail.

On January 16, 2003, and in respect of the survey sent out on my parliamentary account January 3 to 6, 2003, the Secretary of the Treasury Board and Comptroller of Canada, Jim Judd, sought to undermine the confidentiality of the survey and discourage public servants from responding to the survey.

On January 17, 2003, an employee with the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Rob Wright, did the same when he advised employees in the department that my assurance of confidentiality could not be guaranteed, an effort to intimidate public servants from responding.

On January 14, 2003, Cathy McLaughlin, who is the Assistant Director of Diversity and Official Languages Program at Human Resources Development Canada, demanded that staff in the department not respond to the questionnaire.

• (1505)

On that same day, HRDC director Shirley Kimery instructed employees in the department to not respond to the questionnaire. Each of those unwarranted interferences breached my privilege as a member of this House as they relate to free speech, inquiry and the use of e-mail as an extension of the proceedings of Parliament. More important, if you find, Mr. Speaker, that the actions of these individuals did not breach a specific privilege, they nonetheless are a contempt of Parliament.

In that regard, I refer to Marleau and Montpetit, 2000 edition, at page 52, which points out that:

Contempt may be an act or omission; it does not have to actually obstruct or impede the House or a Member, it merely has to have the tendency to produce such results.

Over the years members have brought to the attention of the House instances in which attempts were made to impede, obstruct or interfere in members abilities to conduct their duties, but there are no hard and fast rules about the manner in which such obstruction occurs.

This is what Speaker Sauvé conveyed in her ruling of October 29, 1980, and the point Marleau and Montpetit are making on page 52. Pointedly, such instances ought not be solely viewed in the context

Privilege

of whether such obstruction was physical in nature, but whether the effect of the action was to impede a member's parliamentary privilege, the discharge of his or her duties or which offends the authority or dignity of the House.

In a similar vein, I refer to Erskine May's 21st edition which deals with contempt at page 115. It notes that it is not possible to list every act which might be considered to amount to contempt. Accordingly, such incidents need to be measured and weighed against the rights of members to perform their duties without undue interference.

The last point I want to make on the issue relates to the manner in which the contempt occurred. This is very significant because, as noted in Joseph Maingot's *Proceedings in Parliament*, at page 94:

One must not lose sight of the fact that "proceedings in Parliament" is not the only criterion or the only criterion for the House of Commons when determining whether it has jurisdiction in any matter. Contempt of Parliament rarely occurs during a "Proceeding of Parliament" but rather it emanates from outside the House...

This very point was at the heart of the issue, which Speaker Francis ruled on and to which I previously referred. In that precedent setting ruling of February 20, 1984, Speaker Francis found that the action of public servants to withhold cooperation, "would undoubtedly hinder that member in fulfilling his duties".

By way of summary and conclusion, I am confident that a contempt of Parliament has occurred with regard to the actions of the individuals who undermined my effort to inquire and communicate with public servants.

I believe your review, Mr. Speaker, of this matter will find that I have established that the individuals named, through their actions, produced results that had the effect of impeding me as a member of Parliament in the discharge of my duties. Again I reiterate the point made in Maingot that:

Contempt of Parliament rarely occurs during a "Proceeding of Parliament" but rather it emanates from outside the House...

As such, Mr. Speaker, if you find that a contempt of the House has occurred, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

• (1510)

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to respond briefly to this point of privilege. There are three or four issues and I will be very brief.

The hon. member referred to free speech. I do not believe he has made a case that someone threatened him that he could not speak in the House of Commons or one of its parliamentary committees. That perhaps would be a case to be made, but I do not think it was made. It was not even alleged.

On the matter of what the hon. member called his inquiry, that is a totally inaccurate way of portraying what this aspect of privilege is about. I believe that this has to do with the fact that a parliamentary committee summons people who are supposed to give actual facts, the truth and so on. Nothing ever has said that a member of the House had a right to disrupt some 200,000 civil servants, or whatever the number, by sending them e-mails. I do not believe that anyone could allege that in any way justifies the action taken by the hon. member.

Points of Order

On the issue of confidentiality, has anyone ever heard of a confidential e-mail to 200,000 people? This is what the hon. member is alleging, that his confidentiality has been broken.

Finally, if senior civil servants had directed their staff not to respond to disruptions of their work, whether by a member of this House or by anyone else in the course of their actions, by receiving this material, insulting as it was because I saw it, all the power to them as far as I am concerned.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt for raising his question of privilege and the government House leader for his contribution. I will take the matter under advisement and return to the House in due course.

However, while I am on the subject, I would like to take this opportunity to comment briefly on the context of the issues raised by the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt.

As members know, I take very seriously my responsibility as the guardian of the rights and privileges of each member of the House and of the House as an institution.

In the matter of this member's electronic communications in recent days, it has been brought to my attention that use is being made by the hon. member of the services of the House, namely the e-mail system, and this use has presented unprecedented difficulties.

Briefly put, the volume of messages and the size of each message are such as to interfere not only with the operation of the system as a whole here at the House of Commons but with the operation of systems in place in various government departments and agencies. So toxic has been the effect on various outside recipients that a government-wide alert has been issued with regard to these mailings that are viewed as dangerous and reprehensible spamming because of their negative effect on the functioning of the receiving system.

Accordingly, as your Speaker, I had to weigh the rights of the individual member against the rights of all other hon. members and I have reached the following conclusion. Until specific guidelines have been adopted to regulate mass e-mailings, just as we regulate mass mailings by regular post, I have directed officials to contact any member whose activities impede the proper functioning of the system here at the House or the functioning of systems off the Hill to inform that member to cease such destructive activity.

Alternatives will be proposed where possible and if the member does not comply, I have instructed officials to suspend the member's account. That means there will be no e-mails.

I want to stress that these measures will only be taken to deal with abuses of the services that are provided to each member, abuses which interfere with the continued, untrammelled use of these services by all hon. members.

I thank the House for its attention.

Mr. Jim Pankiw: Mr. Speaker, on that subject, I would like to inform you that when it was brought to my attention that the government's systems, which have not be upgraded since 1984, were unable to handle this, I instructed my assistant to work with the information technology people. They have worked out a system by which these e-mails can be sent in no disruptive manner, which was never my intent.

I am more than prepared to—

• (1515)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member and as I indicated I will continue to monitor the situation.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on November 14, 2002, I placed a question on the Order Paper, Question No. 47, regarding “losses of public property due to an offence or other illegal act” for the Department of National Defence.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, there are new rules governing the disposition of questions on the Order Paper when the government fails to respond within the requested 45 days. Standing Order 39(5) (b) states:

If such a question remains unanswered at the expiration of the said period of forty-five days, the matter of the failure of the Ministry to respond shall be deemed referred to the appropriate Standing Committee. Within five sitting days of such a referral the Chair of the committee shall convene a meeting of the committee to consider the matter of the failure of the Ministry to respond.

While I did receive a response from the Ministry of National Defence it only tabled a partial response on January 27, 2003, to the question I posed. At the conclusion of its response it stated:

However, the Department of National Defence has obtained information representing \$93,000 of the \$220,000 addressed in Question 47 (see attached chart) and will provide the remaining information as soon as practicable.

Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to that last phrase, “and will provide the remaining information as soon as practicable”.

What we have is an answer, yet not the answer to the question which I posed. Technically speaking, we can say that we have received an answer from the Department of National Defence, however it openly admits that it has not answered the question and will provide the information in its words “as soon as practicable”. There is no timeframe stipulated in this answer. We are not aware if we are talking days, months or years. Therefore the department has taken the position that it can respond to Parliament on its timetable rather than on Parliament's timetable.

This is the tail wagging the dog. Serious questions posed by Parliament requesting an answer within 45 days should be tabled in this House within 45 days and not on a timetable at the discretion of the minister who has not even indicated what that timetable will be.

The information requested in Question No. 47 on November 14, 2002, used to be published as a matter of course in the Public Accounts of Canada on an individual item-by-item basis. The government has since taken it upon itself to aggregate these amounts and report them on a lump sum basis. This reduces the openness and transparency required in a democracy, and that openness and transparency would be further impaired if the department is able to provide the information as and when it sees fit.

*Routine Proceedings***POLITICAL FINANCING**

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the legislation I have just introduced forms part of the eight point action plan on ethics, announced on June 11, 2002, by the Prime Minister of Canada, to improve the fairness and transparency of Canada's electoral system. These changes also build on an overhaul of our electoral legislation, which I introduced in the last Parliament through Bill C-2, to modernize many aspects of the Canada Elections Act.

There has long been a perception, whether founded or not, that certain groups in society—corporations, unions and the wealthy—may exercise undue influence in our political system through the financial contributions they make to political parties and candidates. This legislation addresses this perception and enhances the fairness and transparency of our political system by ensuring that full disclosure of contributions and financial controls would apply to all political participants.

[*Translation*]

While parties and candidates are already subject to disclosure requirements, other important participants in the political process are not.

According to the bill, party riding associations, leadership candidates and nomination contestants would now be required to disclose contributions received as well as expenses incurred to the Chief Electoral Officer.

Furthermore, nomination contestants would be subject to a spending limit equivalent to 50% of the candidates' spending limit in the same riding in the previous election.

[*English*]

A further key element to the bill is a prohibition on contributions from corporations, unions and other associations. As a minor exception to this prohibition, corporations, unions and associations would be allowed to contribute a maximum of \$1,000 annually to the aggregate of candidates, local associations, and nomination contestants of a registered political party.

The bill would limit the amount that individuals could contribute: the aggregate of a \$10,000 annual donation to a registered party, all of its local associations, candidates and nomination contestants combined. Individuals would be allowed to contribute \$10,000 to the leadership contestants in a particular leadership campaign.

Together, these reforms would increase confidence of Canadians in our electoral system.

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

Of course, the virtual elimination of political contributions from corporations and unions, and the new limits on individual contributions, would have a significant financial impact on political parties and, to a lesser extent, on candidates.

For that reason, the bill would also increase the financial assistance already provided to political parties and candidates.

Since Standing Order 39(5)(b) is a new procedure, I would not want us to get off on the wrong foot, and therefore I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to refer this matter either to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts or the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs on the basis that the question has not been answered.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for St. Albert for his question. Of course, my heart goes out to him in not getting what he regards as a proper answer. I must tell him that it is tough for the Speaker to intervene and decide whether an answer to a question is a suitable answer. Normally Speakers tend to stay away from it. He will hear more of that later. I cannot find the quote I want to put my finger on on that point. He will hear about it in due course.

* * *

● (1520)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among all parties in the House and I believe you would find consent for the following motion regarding the debate this evening. I move:

That, for the purposes of the debate pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, on this day only, the words "four hours of debate" in sub-section 3(d) of the said Standing Order shall be read as "six hours of debate".

In other words, after this consultation we have agreed to extend the debate by two hours this evening to allow more members to participate.

The Speaker: Does the government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 18 petitions.

* * *

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-24, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Income Tax Act (political financing).

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

Routine Proceedings

Thus, the percentage of election expenses that can be reimbursed to parties would be increased from 22.5% to 50%—as is already the case for candidates—and the definition of reimbursable election expenses would be broadened to include polling. The ceiling for expenses eligible for reimbursement would be increased correspondingly.

The qualification threshold for reimbursement of candidate expenses would be lowered from 15% to 10% of the number of valid votes cast in the riding.

This will allow more candidates—unsuccessful candidates in this case—to receive reimbursement after elections.

As is already done in three provinces, registered parties will receive an allowance. It will be paid quarterly on the basis of the percentage of votes they obtained in the previous general election.

[*English*]

The measures in the bill reflect consultations that I have had with a wide range of experts and stakeholders, as well as provincial authorities across the country. They also draw on political financing measures that are already in place in several Canadian provinces, and indeed other countries as well.

[*Translation*]

I look forward to working with all members of this House on these changes to strengthen the connection between Canadians and their political representatives, and to increase public confidence in the integrity of our electoral system, a system that is already recognized as one of the finest in the world.

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important topic. I wish we were dealing with the issue of campaign finance reform and electoral legislation as part of a broader agreement between the parties and, frankly, on the basis of the issue of fairness to all players.

Unfortunately, the reality is that the government is bringing in legislation because of problems in the Liberal Party's image around corruption and scandals, and because of the struggle for power within the Liberal Party itself. Some of the ideas in the bill are half thought out and, as we know, have divided support even within the government caucus.

The central idea proposed is that we replace corporate and union contributions as the basis for financing political parties with forced funding from taxpayers. Our view is that this solution is worse than the problem.

If shareholders and union workers do not want their funds to be used to fund particular political parties, why should they be forced to do so as taxpayers?

If political parties depend on money from corporate CEOs and union bosses, why should they not get the money directly from those individuals and from others who share those points of view? Pointing out a minor flaw in the legislation, why should they not be able to fund parties even if they have firms of their own, their own personal holding companies, why would they not be able to fund

parties through those vehicles if we are talking about their own money?

We should point out that a large amount of public money goes into federal political parties. We estimate that about 60% of the funding of federal political parties is already coming from taxpayers. Proposals in the legislation would take that number to at least 80%, if not higher.

I should point out that in opposing the legislation the Canadian Alliance is speaking from a position of principle. Even for us, we are not naive, a lot of what the government proposes would be in the short term interests of the Canadian Alliance. We, like all parties, would stand to gain money from this arrangement. In the long term our party and the system will be better if we get our money freely from the people who do in fact support us.

The worst idea in the legislation is new direct stipends to parties themselves based on previous electoral performance. In this case not only would parties be isolated from the feelings they may have from their own former supporters, but frankly even people who never supported them would be asked to support the party, whether it be the Bloc Québécois or the NDP or ourselves.

Not surprising, with this particular provision, the biggest beneficiary would be the Liberal Party. This is fairly typical in a range of proposals in electoral legislation, particularly broadcasting, where the Liberal Party gives itself more time, both paid and unpaid time, than any other party is entitled to.

I would point out that some of these provisions are probably unconstitutional. However, we know that has never bothered the Liberals in this particular area of legislation.

Another bad idea is enhancing rebates. Rebates would be linked only to spending. Very few taxpayers understand that their donations to political parties are subject to tax credit. However, even after that process, when political parties spend the money, the political parties get rebates in many cases both locally and nationally from that additional spending. This is just an addiction to spending. Once again, our same reservation applies here. It is not linked in any way to whether voters want further support of these parties.

I would point out by just looking at the provisions of this legislation that we are already talking, in addition to things I have mentioned, an additional \$30 million to \$40 million of more public funding.

There are some good ideas in here however even those are flawed. Disclosure ideas are good for leadership races. I have said we support that. Unfortunately, provisions in here would make it difficult for people to enter nomination fights to challenge incumbents.

● (1530)

We talk about limits but there are no limits on contributions to private trusts of politicians, which is a very serious oversight. And, of course, there are no limits ultimately on the exposure of the taxpayers themselves to any of this funding.

Routine Proceedings

Historically governments have sought consensus on electoral legislation. I hope we will do that in committee. The member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast will be handling this for us at committee. Some ideas here are worthy of acceptance, many should be discarded and some should be improved, but certainly the government cannot count on the support of the Canadian Alliance unless the philosophy behind unlimited taxpayer funding is changed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I just want to applaud the government initiative on political financing.

In the context of introducing this bill, we all recall the serious problem of the sponsorship scandal. I think the government really needed to improve its image and do something to make Canadians regain faith in democracy and in the way things are done by federal politicians.

For many years, for nine years, the Bloc Québécois has been asking for a change in political party financing. For more than 25 years, we have been fortunate in Quebec to have similar legislation to what is being introduced, legislation of openness, legislation that encourages democracy, legislation that assures the public that things are being done to the letter. If one thing is important in politics today, it is to ensure that politicians are above reproach.

The importance of lobbies in the political arena—people who have an ever-growing influence over the governments and politicians in power—cannot be denied. Fortunately, the new political financing legislation will allow the men and women of this House to be independent from the various lobbies and financial donations given in one form or another that allow groups, individuals or companies to have an inordinate influence on political decisions.

I am very pleased to tell the government that we are with it on this bill. Bloc members will support this initiative and we welcome it with great pleasure. We would simply say to people that yes, there is a price, but there is a price for democracy. We can spare no expense to assure the public that democracy will prevail, that anyone who wants to practice politics in Canada will be able to do so as freely as possible with equal opportunity for everyone. That is what we want and that is what the bill will allow us to do.

At first glance, the only problem I see with this bill is with the current leadership races. They are not covered by the rules. I know that this probably would have required specific provisions, but unfortunately, this seems to me to be a serious oversight.

As for the rest, I think I can say that as the members of the Bloc Québécois have the opportunity to study the bill and review it, they will be very pleased to support it, as we are accustomed to living with similar legislation in Quebec.

I would invite all those who oppose this type of legislation to ask the voters of Quebec, regardless of their political stripes, if they would prefer to do without Quebec's legislation on the financing of political parties. The rate of satisfaction with this legislation—which has existed for more than 25 years now, if memory serves—is extremely high. Voters would not want to go back to the old ways. On the contrary, people are working now to enhance and improve

aspects of the legislation that allow for healthy democracy, free of problems and influence.

I applaud the government's initiative. Once again, we will support the bill.

● (1535)

[*English*]

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to stand and put our thoughts on this important legislation.

Before I begin, I would like to say, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the government House Leader, that the question I asked about 40 minutes ago in this Chamber dealing with the Canada Elections Act, he will note, if he looks at the transcript, had absolutely nothing to do with any technical briefing that was given earlier this day. It was all a matter of public record. Frankly, the answer was not warranted under the circumstances.

With regard to the legislation, it seems to me that the government is endeavouring to have three objectives. First, it says that we need greater transparency and enhanced disclosure. The New Democratic Party agrees with that.

Second, the government wants to promote fairness. Obviously all of us should be in agreement with that.

Third, and finally, the government wants to address the perception of big money having an undue influence in the political process. I will come back to that in just a moment.

This issue has been important for our party and for a number of voters in Canada for many years. As recently as this weekend at our leadership convention, yet another resolution was passed on the matter of donations to political parties. We said that it should be restricted only to individuals. We said that there should be third party limits in place, that public financing needs to be a part of the whole package, including an annual grant, which we note is in the legislation, and that adequate public financing needs to be in place before we can go ahead.

I think Canadians are genuinely concerned when they look at the disclosures on donations, for example, for the member for LaSalle—Émard, and they find that \$10,000 have been contributed to that leadership campaign by something called the ABC Group, that 398536 Alberta Ltd. has contributed thousands of dollars, or that 90808353 Quebec Inc. has contributed money. We do not know and the Canadian public does not know.

Therefore it is accurate and proper that the government is moving forward with legislation that would prohibit this kind of activity, this kind of funding to political parties and to leadership candidates or nominees for a riding association or for a nomination.

We want to look at the bill in detail. We agree with it in principle but we want to make sure that the funding is fairly allocated. We do support tightening the regulation of third party activities. I have not seen anything in here. The minister—

Hon. Don Boudria: It's in the courts.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Dick Proctor: Okay. The minister says that it is coming and we take him at his word.

However I would just observe that we have not had terrific luck in this country in having third party limits enforced by the courts. It may be that with these changes it will make it easier for the courts to rule in favour of restricting third party but that is something that we need to get into.

The individual cap of \$10,000 is a worry in this sense. It is \$3,000 in Quebec and Manitoba, the other two provinces that have this legislation. As I understand this, it is \$10,000 per year to different political parties. It is not \$10,000 total. It is \$10,000 for the Progressive Conservatives, the New Democrats and the Liberals. It seems to us that it will be very difficult to have this perception that big money is influencing politics if we can have a big money individual donating \$40,000 to \$60,000 to political parties. We will want to look very carefully at that.

In conclusion, I want to say that we do support it in principle. We want to look at the details. They say the devil is in the details. We want democracy to be in the details.

● (1540)

[Translation]

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no doubt that the system of financing political parties in Canada needs to be reformed.

[English]

The government's sordid record is testimony to the improper impact of money and influence, from the scandals of Groupaction to the favours for friends which forced ministerial resignations to sending Mr. Gagliano to Denmark. I guess that is the government's version of a witness protection program.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage said it herself, and I quote her, "Obviously, there's a link between corporate donations and government policy...". The great irony is that the Prime Minister who presided over this systematic abuse now proposes to slam the door after he has left the barn. That may simply be to settle scores within his own party but it is the opposite of leadership.

That said, we strongly support the principle of campaign finance reform and will study carefully the details of this proposal, the details being where the government usually hides the devil.

[Translation]

That is why my party, on the eve of the 1988 election, established the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing.

[English]

Through its work, that commission aimed to protect the system against undue influence. Moreover, at our national general meeting in August, my party proposed several more specific reforms.

We have to recognize that our political system has been changed significantly by the growth of narrow and powerful interest groups, many of them with access to large sums of money. It is not healthy to democracy for the party system to be so subject to the powerful and the rich. The appearance of improper influence is a significant source of cynicism about public life, and that too must be changed.

The Prime Minister has told reporters that this will be a question of confidence in his government. Why would he do that? This is a matter of fundamental political morality. Members should not be bound by the power of the party any more than they should be bound by the power of the purse. If the Prime Minister has the courage of his convictions, let him make and win his case on its merits. Let this important matter be subject to a free vote in this Parliament.

* * *

● (1545)

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. John O'Reilly (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, which represented Canada at the meeting of the 48th annual session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, held in Istanbul, Turkey from November 15 to 19, 2002.

* * *

CANADIAN SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-346, an act to ensure safe drinking water throughout Canada.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to reintroduce this act known as an act to ensure safe drinking water throughout Canada.

Essentially it enshrines into law national drinking water standards as opposed to mere guidelines. Members may be aware that we are one of the few countries in the world that does not have true national standards where there is a public right to know if there is a substance in that water which could have a detrimental effect to human health.

I am only moving forward in this regard because of the motion passed in the House on May 8, 2001, where four of the five political parties endorsed this concept. It has been two years and the government has not moved, so I would like to use this act as a catalyst to spur debate so the government can fulfill the commitment it made to parliamentarians on May 8, 2001.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-347, an act to amend the Criminal Code (eliminating conditional sentencing for violent offenders).

He said: Mr. Speaker, my amendment to the Criminal Code is to remove schedule 1 crimes from the list of things that can be considered for conditional sentencing. Schedule 1 crimes, just for the information of members present, include such things as hijacking, sexual interference, sexual exploitation, indecent assault, attempted rape, rape, conspiracy to commit murder, robbery, hostage taking, and kidnapping.

When conditional sentencing was brought in we found and the public found to their horror that people convicted of such offences as violent rapes were given conditional sentencing, which is an option for a judge when he feels that it is not in the public interest to lock people in jail. They can be given a conditional sentence and serve no jail time.

I wish to remove violent offences from that sentencing option. The former Minister of Justice who is now the Minister of Industry has said that it was never intended that it should include violent offenders. This will correct that error.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

Mr. Jim Gook: Mr. Speaker, in the interests of public safety, I ask that the bill not be read a second time but instead be referred directly to committee for all party non-partisan consideration, and I seek unanimous consent for that.

• (1550)

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan have leave to ask for unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to seek unanimous consent to return to presenting reports from committees.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership and associate membership of committees of the House and I should like to move concurrence at this time.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move:

That the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be modified as follows: Rodger Cuzner for Wayne Easter, Lynn Myers for Tony Tirabassi, Benoît Sauvageau for Pierre Brien.

The Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Routine Proceedings

PETITIONS

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to present a petition duly certified by the Clerk on behalf of one of my constituents, Deborah Moss, from Canaan Forks, New Brunswick.

The petition calls upon Parliament to protect all children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify child pornography in any shape or form be appropriately outlawed in this nation. It is the minimum that we owe our children. I appreciate the opportunity to present this petition.

CANADA POST

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents calling upon Parliament to support rural route letter couriers.

Letter couriers on rural routes are calling upon Parliament to repeal one paragraph of the Canada Post Corporation Act, section 13 (5), which prevents them from bargaining collectively to improve their pay and working conditions. The petitioners believe that this denial of a fundamental right allows Canada Post Corporation to maintain salaries and working conditions at a level that is unfair and that this constitutes discrimination against rural workers.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise again to present another petition, bringing the total to 3,645 constituents from the Airdrie, Calgary and Cochrane districts in my riding, calling on the government to come up with legislation immediately to stamp out and obliterate child pornography from the face of the earth, and I certainly support that petition.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of a number of Canadians, including people from my own riding of Mississauga South, on the subject of stem cell research. These petitioners accept, as I do, that life begins at conception and they would like to draw to the attention of the House that Canadians support ethical stem cell research, which has already shown encouraging potential to provide cures and therapies for illnesses and diseases.

They also want to point out that non-embryonic stem cells, also known as adult stem cells, have also shown significant progress without the immune rejection or ethical problems associated with embryonic stem cells. The petitioners therefore call upon Parliament to support legislative measures which support adult stem cell research to find the cures and therapies necessary for Canadians.

Government Orders

CANADA POST

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from citizens of various parts of Ontario who are concerned about the fact that the Canada Post Corporation Act prohibits rural route mail couriers from having collective bargaining rights and they call upon Parliament to repeal section 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act.

• (1555)

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Northumberland county who petition on behalf of numerous people who suffer illnesses such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, diabetes, cancer, muscular dystrophy and spinal cord injury. They point out that ethical stem cell research has proved to be valuable for addressing the conditions of such people and they call upon Parliament to focus its legislative efforts on adult stem cell research to find cures and therapies necessary to treat such illnesses and to help Canadians with those illnesses.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[English]

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers Nos. P-15 and P-16 in the name of the right hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Motion No. P-15

That an Order of the House do issue for the production of copies of all reports of the Ethics Counsellor concerning the former Solicitor General.

Motion No. P-16

That an Order of the House do issue for the production of copies of all reports of the Ethics Counsellor concerning the former Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to have the parliamentary secretary please explain to the House why it is that he has had answers on the production of papers for two of the questions that have been tabled by the right hon. member for Calgary Centre, but there are still ten outstanding. Could the parliamentary secretary please tell us why the other ten have not been answered?

Mr. Geoff Regan: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, I do not have the information on that in front of me. I will have to check that and get back to my hon. colleague. I believe those answers are in departments and are on their way here. I hope to have them soon,

but I will get back to my hon. colleague on the status of those answers.

Mr. Speaker, the report in question is considered advice provided for the use of government and is exempt from release—this is Motion No. P-15, by the way—as per the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons on Tuesday, October 22, 2002. On that date, in response to a question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister stated:

I received the report from the ethics counsellor. He is a counsellor to me. When he is advising me, the ministers, members of Parliament or bureaucrats, these communications are privileged between the adviser and the Prime Minister.

Therefore I ask the right hon. member to withdraw his motion.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, I do not withdraw that motion. I think it is nonsense for the reports of the ethics counsellor to be hidden from this Parliament. It is a question of fundamental principle and right of this Parliament and the people of Canada to know the facts, so the question stands, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: The matter is transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-16 in the name of the right hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Mr. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, there was no written report on this issue, therefore I ask the right hon. member to withdraw his motion.

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Speaker, I will take that matter to debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly the matter is transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

Mr. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all other Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

• (1600)

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that, because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by 23 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION ACT

The House resumed from January 27 consideration of Bill C-13, an act respecting assisted human reproduction, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 4.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise again on behalf of the constituents of Surrey Central to complete my remarks on Bill C-13 on assisted human reproductive technologies and related research.

Government Orders

We oppose the bill unless it is amended. Before I continue my remarks I will summarize what I said yesterday.

The Canadian Alliance minority report recommended that the final legislation clearly recognize the human embryo as human life and that the statutory declaration include the phrase "respect for human life". All human beings possess the fundamental human rights of life and freedom. I also said that it is in the best interest of every child to know who his or her parents are. No sperm or egg donors should be anonymous.

AHRs, assisted human reproduction clinics, would have to be licensed and tightly regulated. All regulations must be laid before Parliament and automatically referred to the health committee.

I also stated that I strongly support and encourage health sciences research and development, and research on adult stem cells. Thus, we are calling for more funding of adult stem cell research. I support provisions against human and therapeutic cloning, animal-human hybrids, sex selection, gene line alteration, buying or selling of embryos, and paid surrogacy.

Commercial surrogacy would be banned but the expenses of surrogate mothers could be repaid. Thus, surrogate mothers could result in effective commercial surrogacy. That is why we oppose Motion No. 52.

The health minister wants to undo the amendments made at committee which would make counselling for surrogacy mandatory and which were supported by the Canadian Alliance. It waters down the intent of members of the health committee that such counselling be required, ideally by a third party and not by a fertility clinic.

Becoming a surrogate is a very serious matter to the extent that the health committee saw fit to amend the bill to prohibit surrogacy for women under age 21. Surrogacy can have profound effects on relationships between husband and wife, within families, between surrogate and adopting parents, and most important, on the surrogate children themselves. Therefore counselling should be mandatory. I wonder why the health minister is not explaining or defending her amendment.

We also oppose Motion No. 72. The minister again wants to undo the committee amendment requiring board members of AHR agencies to come under conflict of interest rules. Board members should not have commercial interests in the field of AHR or related research, for example, fertility clinics, biotech companies, et cetera.

Imagine an employee or investor in a biotech company with a financial interest in embryonic stem cell research making decisions for Canadians on the regulation of such research, including the definition of the word "necessary" as specified in clause 40. Or imagine a director of a fertility clinic making regulations on the limits of sperm and egg donations or the number of embryos produced for IVF treatments. Such conflicts of interest need to be prevented in the legislation. The minister needs to explain and defend these amendments.

In a nutshell, we oppose the bill. On the particular motions I mentioned, I indicated whether we support or oppose them. I would like to make clear that I support stem cell research but we would like

to put a moratorium on embryonic research for a period of three years.

• (1605)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise in the House of Commons in the new year on behalf of the constituents of Calgary East. I am very happy to speak to Bill C-13, an act respecting assisted human reproductive technologies and related research.

As we all know, at the beginning of the year the Clonaid company said that it had cloned a human being, the first cloned baby. This sent shock waves around the world. All religious leaders and people who want dignity given to human life were shocked and stunned by the news. I was stunned also. I hope we do not go along with that research.

The bill is an attempt to not go toward the route of cloning, but the route of research, the route of human reproduction technology. There are a lot of consequences for this research.

We tried to draft this in a bill in committee. A committee researched the issue and presented its report. The report indicated that we needed to address the issue and bring in rules and regulations and try to stop the free-for-all research which has the potential of going in the direction that society in general does not want to go and respect the basic principle of human life.

The government presented Bill C-13 to try and address the issue. While the intent is there to have some control and some rules and regulations, some sort of ethical behaviour and ethical dimensions to this point, nevertheless like anything else the government does, it is job that has only been half done. The bill tries to do everything and in the process, it ends up doing nothing. That is the essence of why the Canadian Alliance opposes Bill C-13.

My colleague has presented many amendments. We hope that these amendments will be accepted and will make the bill stronger. Then we can address all the issues and ensure that there are no loopholes or cracks in the system. This is a subject that is creating a tremendous amount of debate among Canadians.

In Motion No. 72 the government has created an agency that will be given the mandate to create some ethical guidelines as well as rules for doing research on stem cells, whether they are embryonic or adult stem cells.

The problem as usual is there seems to be a lack of commitment by the government. It is somehow afraid to take a tough stand. There are no conflict of interest guidelines. The minister has the power to appoint anyone to the board.

Government Orders

•(1610)

If the minister appoints a person who falls under the conflict of interest rules, what stops that person from having a conflict, such as working for a biotech company? Of course, the minister will say that it is not possible and they are going to do due diligence. But again what is the problem? Why can it not be put in the bill to make it transparent that a person who has a conflict of interest will not be appointed to the board? That is clear, plain and simple. Yet that is missing, and it gives the authority to the minister.

Canadians know very well the record of the government on transparency. They know about the boondoggle in the gun registry.

This afternoon the government introduced the bill on political party financing. In the dying days of his regime, the Prime Minister is now bringing in this legislation. He wants to leave a legacy but he has opened up to the fact that his Kyoto legacy is going off on a tangent and his African legacy is having severe problems. He wants to create that as a legacy, despite opposition from his own members. He is talking about bringing in transparency, but the government's record on transparency has left Canadians shaking their heads. With this bill, it is again showing up here.

It is amazing how the government is so afraid to step into the area where people are held more accountable. I do not know what the government is afraid of. The Prime Minister will not give accountability even to his backbenchers. Look at the vote we had on choosing the committee chairmen. The Prime Minister is the one who had problems with that.

The government's record on transparency and allowing openness is on the record and Canadians will not buy into it. The same thing is happening on the subject of stem cell research, which is a subject of the future. The potential for research and for finding cures for many of what ails the human race through stem cells is tremendous. There is a desire to see that this research carries on, but in a manner that is acceptable to the Canadian people. We do not want to go down the road of what we heard when that company came out of nowhere and said it had cloned a human being.

It is critically important as we debate this bill that we in the official opposition point out what we think are the flaws of this bill. Therefore, it is difficult for us support the bill.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this bill.

Right off the bat, I would like to commend one person and a group. I want to commend the Alliance Party critic, the member for Yellowhead, for the outstanding work he has done in dealing with this issue. Along with that, I congratulate the committee which has come up with some pretty good recommendations and amendments at the committee level that have been presented to the minister, which are now amendments that the minister wants to eliminate and undo. For the life of me, I cannot figure out why that is the case.

The minister should be in the House explaining for example why there should not be mandatory counselling for relationships between husbands and wives, surrogate parents, children and all the people involved. Counselling should be mandatory because of the possible deep effects on the relationships of the individuals involved.

Why in the world would the minister want to not make that kind of counselling mandatory as recommended by the committee? It makes no sense for that kind of motion to be proposed without the minister standing in this place and trying to explain to people why that kind of a change would be so necessary. It makes absolutely no sense that she is not available to defend the stand in that regard.

I apologize if I have wandered off into things I should not say, but I do want to point out that—

•(1615)

The Deputy Speaker: Let me interrupt very briefly to remind the House, since we have just come back from the Christmas break period, that the longstanding practice in our Chamber has always been to not refer to the absence of any members in the House given the very varied tasks that we are all called upon to perform in our duties.

Mr. Myron Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I did not wish to refer to the absence or presence of anyone. I just wanted to refer to the fact that there has been no explanation from the department or the minister's office to explain to me and other members why this kind of proposal would be brought forward.

As the opposition, one of the major problems we have had with practically all departments, HRDC, justice, heritage and so on, has been accountability. That is one area in which the government has demonstrated its weakness over and over again. For the minister to want to undo an amendment presented by the committee which required the board members of the human reproduction agency—

The Deputy Speaker: Again I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member but I have a point of order from the hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This is arguably one of the most important pieces of legislation that we will be dealing with in the 37th Parliament. It is important that we look at it in all seriousness. I would like to ask for a quorum call.

The Deputy Speaker: I see quorum. Resuming debate.

Hon. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. For the record, while there happens to be a quorum in the room, I notice only three members of the Alliance, one to listen to the hon. member—

The Deputy Speaker: Respectfully, that was not a point of order but I am encouraged that more members are present in the Chamber. At any time it is always very pleasing to the Speaker.

Mr. Myron Thompson: Mr. Speaker, if I did not shame the environment minister, who would make such a mistake after I have just been severely scolded for talking about who is here and who is not, he should not be doing those kinds of things. One would think that as a minister of the crown he would know better.

Government Orders

We were talking about accountability before we had to call for quorum. Accountability is one of the biggest weaknesses of the Liberal government. It has been demonstrated over and over again and has been reported in every Auditor General report that I have ever read. Accountability is so weak that we cannot even ask for receipts from some ministers who claim up to \$80,000 to \$100,000 worth of expenses.

However we have a committee doing a great job of making sure that the board members on the agency, under Motion No. 72, would be accountable. The committee wanted board members to come under the conflict of interest rules. That makes sense. That is called good accountability. We cannot allow conflicts of interest in these particular matters. These issues are extremely important.

We now have a minister who wants to undo that amendment. She is not worried about appointing different individuals to this board in regard to possible conflicts of interest and she wants the board to report directly to the minister.

When will we decide in this House that we are a Parliament of the people, that we have a responsibility to all Canadians and that reporting to Parliament is a good idea when it comes to boards and committees that are working on our behalf? Why do they always report to one?

The lack of accountability is a disgrace. It is shameful and it is a practice that ought to be stopped. I would hope that the governing bodies would start thinking about that. If we are going to truly be accountable to the people who elect us and put us in our seats, then we have a right to know what is going on as well as the minister.

Unfortunately, we have found over the past that reporting is sometimes not as accurate as it ought to be, and we would like to hear it directly. I, for one, as a member of Parliament, would like to hear directly from these various committees that are working on our behalf, instead of just the minister who insists that they report to him or her and no one else.

If we were to put our imaginations to work we could imagine all kinds of things that could go wrong with the kind of body of people who would not have to live under conflict of interest rules, and maybe some other things that could have a major impact on what they are trying to do with this particular legislation.

I really encourage all members to not support Motion No. 72, in particular, and not to support Motion 52 as it weakens the intent of the committee and its hard work in trying to come up with the answers that would make this whole idea work tremendously.

We are quite enthused with the reports that we have been getting on certain aspects of adult stem cell research, even from the umbilical cord of a newborn, and how it can be used in a positive way. I think we could just forget about creating embryos for that purpose. It is a bad idea.

Mr. Speaker, I know you might not think that the speech last night on TV by the President of the United States, George Bush, would have much to do with the topic that we are discussing today but has to do with one thing. I was proud to hear the President of the United States stand in his place and say that under his representation he would guarantee to the people of America that cloning would never

be allowed in that land. I would like to see our Prime Minister rise to his feet and say that under his leadership, and as long as he had a say, that cloning would never be part of Canada's plan. Cloning is not something we should get into. Cloning is not for humans to decide how this should happen.

● (1620)

I like the old process of creating humans myself. Maybe that is because I am a little older than some, but cloning is such a dangerous thing that I really appreciate the president's comments on behalf of the American people. I wish the Prime Minister would make the same kind of comments on behalf of Canadians.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we are back again speaking about the assisted human reproduction act. It came before us previously as Bill C-56. We are talking now mainly about the Group No. 4 amendments. I want to make some general comments before I get into the specifics of the Group No. 4 motions and amendments.

One of the reasons that we need to have a discussion about this important issue is that we are setting the stage, not just for a single bill but for a legislated attitude toward people. We are setting up a bill that sets out a legislative attitude toward other human beings in our society. The conclusions that we reach in the House about our attitude and our decisions about other human beings will have great consequences.

For example, we have seen throughout this century what happens when governments and ideologies decide that individual human beings are not unique and that they are only basic economic units. I had the opportunity in university to sit under three years of teaching that bombarded us with Karl Marx's political theory that all events can be analyzed from a particular economic perspective, and that human beings then must fit into that perspective and into that analysis. Individuals are never seen as unique in that ideology. They are seen as a commodity that needs to be used.

Interestingly enough, through the last century we have seen that theory lived out through various socialistic and communistic governments on this earth. In the last century there has been more brutality from those regimes than anywhere that we have seen in the history of mankind. It is important that we have a unique view of the uniqueness of human life and what it means.

I can think of a couple of examples. In Stalin's Russia, one of the results of his decision to get control of the middle class farming communities was that he was willing to starve them until they disappeared. He had no concern for the uniqueness, the individuality or the greatness of human life.

In China, even today, we see that it subjects its individual citizens to the wishes of what it would call the collective. We see this show up in different situations where there is brutality toward people who may believe differently than their leadership does.

In the Sudan we see another socialist regime that is only too happy to wage war for money. It has little responsibility toward its own people and it seems to care little about the human life of its citizens.

Government Orders

It is important that we decide what our attitude and our view will be toward human life. Where there is a weak position taken regarding human uniqueness and individuality, there is definitely a loss of compassion for others. I would suggest that we are not as immune from this as greatly as we think we might be.

We see a number of places where the government already refuses to deal with issues that involve the value of human life. We spent a day earlier this week talking about child protection and child pornography. I would suggest that the unwillingness of the government to deal directly and decisively with child pornography is one such example of a government that is refusing to deal with those issues that say that human life has ultimate value.

Last spring we had the opportunity to meet with the police officers who deal with this material. After seeing their presentation I would agree with my colleague from Wild Rose that there is absolutely no excuse for allowing this to continue.

I was embarrassed the other day by the NDP's position that as long as people can create things out of their own imagination, that there needed to be some reason to defend that. After talking to the police officers who have to deal with the child pornography issue on a daily basis, I guess I do not have the tolerance that others might. This material is repugnant. It is abhorrent. The failure to deal with the issue really touches at the heart of how the government views the people who are its citizens.

We need to take a look at a couple of questions. One of them is, when does human life begin? Although present law says that human life begins at birth, that is a ridiculous position from a scientific perspective, and it really is nonsense. I was reminded of that the other day when I saw one of the beer companies' advertisements. They had a picture of a fetus in the womb on their poster. The point that was made was "When you drink, she feels it". I thought it was interesting that beer companies will accept the fact that fetuses and embryos are human beings but our government refuses to do that.

●(1625)

Clearly, I would suggest that the point at which being becomes human is when the union of the genetic material takes place and when we have the completion of the DNA package. Whether we want to embrace that or not, scientifically that is the only point where human life really begins.

Scientists have thrown out a couple of red herrings. One in particular is when they say that they have picked a 14 day period and after that 14 days is the arbitrary decision that now this is human life. That decision has not been based on science. It basically has been meant to avoid the scientific discussion and to stay away from the discussion of when does human life really begin.

I would suggest that scientists generally have failed the test of speaking clearly on when human life begins. Because of that, they run the risk of disqualifying themselves by not dealing honestly with this issue. It has become for many scientists more of an economic than a scientific or ethical decision. They want to have the open field. They want to have the free rein to run the experiments. They do not want to deal with the moral choices that need to be made so they try to avoid doing that at all costs. It is important that someone

in the country address this issue and I would suggest that it is the responsibility of Parliament to deal seriously and decisively with it.

I think we can accept that human life is put together at conception when the DNA material is put together, but there is a second important question that needs to be asked. What is human life worth? Throughout history we have traditionally valued human life from its natural beginning. There has been much discussion of it over the years but most belief systems, most religions and most philosophies have accepted that until the last few years.

In places and times we have seen the devaluing of that idea and that value. I guess one of the prime examples would be Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany where there was a prevailing ideology that he set forth, and that was that not all people were worthy of living out their natural lives. He targeted particular groups. We know that he targeted racial groups, the weak, the handicapped, the visually identifiable groups and in lots of places skin colour and complexion was enough to be questioned and persecuted.

I am reminded of a saying that no one does what they think is wrong. We all justify our behaviour and we are prepared to do that. We need to remember that Hitler's focus was on genetics; it was just on a different stage of development. We need to be very careful where we go with this issue, with this bill and how we begin to treat other human beings and human life.

I want to talk a bit about what is the result of taking a low view of human life. If we cannot come to an agreement on what human life is worth, we will always have inevitable consequences from that. One thing that happens if we set a low view of human life and we do not say that human life is unique right from its beginning, is that we always devalue the defenceless and the ones who do not have a voice. I think we have begun to see this already in the Netherlands where many who are in hospitals do not even know that they are being euthanized. They do not have a voice. They do not have the ability or the strength to say no. Because of that they are not given the voice to say no.

As I mentioned, it seems there is an inability to deal with the child pornography issue. This government cannot bring itself to deal with the issue. It shows a willingness to live with a bad and I guess some people would call it an evil court decision. A casual attitude to human life begins to manifest itself in so many different areas and I hope we are not beginning to see that in our own country.

A casual attitude to human life also shows a willingness to assign different degrees of worth to different human beings. We had the issue a few years ago, and it will continue, with Tracy Latimer, the choice her father made to end her life and the government's uncomfortable silence about that issue. As we look at the issue of human life, I hope it will not progress to include others who have what some people would say no use in our society, and that is the handicapped and the elderly.

I know my time is running out and I will have an opportunity to speak to this issue later. However we need to reconsider what we do here, take it seriously and treat it very carefully as we move into this area and issue of what we do with human life.

Government Orders

●(1630)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on this group of amendments that have been proposed to the new bill on reproductive technology.

We are very pleased that an agency will be created to oversee the operations of assisted reproductive technology clinics. We think it is very important that there be some oversight. Most other mature democracies have had this for some time. Assisted human reproduction should not be a wide open field simply because from these activities come children whose interests must be protected, both before the fact and after the fact. We think the establishment of an agency is very good news, it is long overdue, and we would like to see it put into place very quickly.

The whole area of assisted human reproduction, as we know, needs to be more tightly regulated. With advances in science and some people pushing the envelope way past where moral and ethical prudence would dictate, we have the need to have tighter regulations to make the whole process safer and more effective for prospective parents to use.

Assisted human reproduction clinics will now have to be licensed and regulated by this agency which is created by this bill. The agency will be subject to access to information so that citizens can have some oversight, some input and some idea how the agency is operating, and it will have some accountability mechanism.

We support the amendment that would require the agency to produce standardized forms and have some standardized information that is required to be presented to individuals who use assisted human reproduction. We think that kind of standardization will be very helpful and necessary as people donate, use and dispose of human reproductive material.

The Auditor General, in February 2001, made it very clear that Canada has serious problems in its sperm banks, such as poor record keeping and ineligible donors. That is pretty scary when we think that the whole purpose of these activities is to produce children who will be affected by any shoddy or inappropriate operations that lead to them coming into being. Uniformity and standardization is extremely important to protect the interests of children.

However the minister wants to undo some of the committee recommendations. We are not in favour of the minister's move to do this.

First, the minister wants to undo a recommendation that people who sit on this agency to regulate assisted human reproductions must not have a conflict of interest. The minister says that it is okay if people who are regulating assisted human reproduction are also players in the whole area.

It does not take a lot of imagination to understand that people with a vested interest in the scope and what is allowed should not make the decisions. They should not be the same people. We do not understand why the minister would say that it is okay for people who have a conflict of interest to make decisions in this important area. The minister is not here to explain why this would be so.

●(1635)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I have to remind the member that she cannot refer to the absence of any member.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, let me rephrase that, and I do apologize. The minister has not explained to the House why she feels the amendment is important or necessary. Absent the rationale behind this, we can only criticize and oppose the move to say that people with a conflict of interest should make these important decisions. Heads of projects and people who have financial interests in assisted human reproduction clearly would have a lack of credibility and objectivity that would be very necessary to make decisions in this area.

We also have a problem with the minister's amendment to repeal the committee's recommendation that the agency overseeing assisted reproduction should be composed of 50% women, again because the minister has failed to inform the House as to what her rationale might be.

We do know that assisted human reproduction is something that is very much targeted to meet the needs of women. Men are also involved, particularly when there is a family situation, although not always. We think there should be a very strong component of input from women when these kinds of decisions are being made. Maybe it does not need to be 50% but certainly there is a concern that women may be closed out to an unacceptable degree from input into the operation of the agency. Because they are the main clients and customers, I guess one could say the ones who access this important technology, it is important that their voice be heard.

Again, we would like to know why the recommendation has been withdrawn. We want to ensure that women are not closed out by their male peers in a male dominated area of endeavour without some good reason. I would urge this to be revisited by the House.

Board members should be chosen for their wisdom and judgment according to the health committee. We certainly agree with that. There should be a very strong merit principal but the people who are most impacted by this activity should also have strong input.

We think there is merit for amendments that would ensure that the agency is adequately funded. That just makes sense. There is no point in creating an agency that does not have the money to do the job. We support an amendment that says the agency would establish a dispute resolution process which may include arbitration in case there is disagreement between the agency, donors, licensees or any other relevant parties. I guess it is pretty hard, if the people running the agency can have a conflict of interest, to see how this dispute resolution mechanism could work fairly but it obviously will be extremely important.

Government Orders

There is an interesting provision in this group of amendments with respect to the reporting that is required of the agency. Originally the agency would report to Parliament annually but the minister would like to change it to say that the minister would report on behalf of the agency. We disagree with the report of the agency being filtered through the minister. We think the less political filtering there is in this important area the better. I would like very much to see the minister explain why she is putting the amendment forward because we would oppose it simply on the basis that it puts a undesirable barrier between Parliament and the agency.

● (1640)

Lastly, we believe that people entering into an agreement to produce surrogate children must have counselling. The minister would like to remove the requirement for counselling and say it would be made available. We think it must be made mandatory.

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the report stage amendments in Group No. 4 to Bill C-13, the reproductive technology bill.

As has been mentioned before, our concern is that this new agency be held accountable, and that it have transparent procedures and processes that would allow Canadians to follow-through on how this legislation would affect them, and how the government would respond to the new changes in the legislation.

We are concerned with the changes that the minister has made that go contrary to the recommendations that came from the health committee when it studied this reproductive technology bill in great detail. The health committee was quite clear that this was going in a new direction, and that there were some practices and procedures that would cause some concern to Canadians. The committee was concerned that there be protection and some control over how this technology would be used.

The committee was quite upfront with how it saw the agency that would oversee this legislation. It was concerned how the agency would run its business, be held accountable and responsible, and report to Parliament. The minister, for whatever reasons, wants to hold control within her own department and within her own person over the response to Parliament and the accountability factor.

We have problems with that. We feel that in order for something to be accountable and transparent there is a need to separate it from politics as much as possible. There is a willingness on the part of this party to see that this agency be somewhat removed from the minister so it can do its job, look at the technology, look at how the bill would be utilized, how the regulations would be upheld, and respond in kind to that.

There was a concern felt by committee members that because of the issue there needed to be a presence of the female gender on the board. The committee felt it was important that women have the ability to be part of monitoring reproductive technology regulations in legislation. For some reason, and I find it quite surprising, the minister felt that was not necessary. She felt that an all male board would suffice. Even more startling, she felt that an agency consisting of one person might suffice. That causes us some concern.

There must be greater detail as to how this agency would be put together, who would become members and who it would represent. I for one think it is important that an agency of this nature dealing with the subject of reproductive technology be representative of some of the different groups of people with the knowledge and ability to monitor what happens from this day forward. The agency should have some medical persons on it. It would be sensible to have some scientific representation. It should have some lay representation, representing ordinary citizens and how they would feel on these issues. That is something we would like to see changed to better reflect what the health committee recommended in the first place.

We would like the minister to reconsider how she would form this agency and who she would appoint. We would like the minister to ensure that a female would be sitting on the board. Now would be the time to address these concerns and to amend the legislation to ensure that these concerns are considered.

● (1645)

Another concern that our party is expressing is that when people want to build a family and have children, and they use the new reproductive technologies that they are fully made aware of what options they have available to them. Different reproductive technologies are becoming more and more accessible. More individuals are aware that they can use these technologies to start a family. I am not sure that there is full disclosure as to what their options are, what processes are involved, and what some of the legal ramifications might be.

The Canadian Alliance feels that there should be some set-up where these individuals have not only available to them, but are encouraged to understand the legal issues. Mandatory is a harsh word. They should go into reproductive technology process with the full knowledge of what it means.

I do not think it is too much to ask that the minister ensure that all information is made available so that individuals would not end up in an unforeseen situation or one that they did not know about.

I will broaden the discussion by saying that we have seen where this has happened with pharmaceutical drugs, where individuals were referred to the use of a pharmaceutical drug without knowing in depth what the side effects might be and what harm could be caused. Now we are seeing a ramification in the legal perspective of how not having full disclosure of the risks taken come back through the courts. This is a very expensive process when something happens and a person was not made aware of what could happen.

We must take the same direction with reproductive technology that we should have taken with pharmaceutical drugs and the mandatory provision of the medical people to advise patients of what the risks are. We could avoid many legal parameters if issues were dealt with up front. If making it mandatory is the only way it can be done, then perhaps that is how the procedure has to be done.

Thus we could ensure that the individuals who are taking advantage of reproductive technologies know what they are getting into. I do not think that would be too much to ask. It is something that as we get into this whole new field that will change day by day, that we can provide that kind of background and knowledge to individuals seeking this method.

Government Orders

We are looking for change through Group No. 4 amendments. The two issues would be the agency and how it is put together, who is sitting on the agency and how it would report to Parliament, not the minister. The other issue is the mandatory counselling of every individual who is taking advantage of reproductive technology, or some kind of sharing of knowledge so that they fully understand and accept the dimensions of the procedures they would be undertaking.

I wish to encourage the government to have an open mind and not to shy away from making amendments to legislation to broaden it and make it more definitive, to change it so that it is a better piece of legislation, so we can avoid some pitfalls that we may find in the future simply by taking our time and doing it properly the first time.

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●(1650)

REPORT OF THE PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Before resuming debate I wish to inform the House that there was an error in the tabling of the report of the privacy commissioner concerning substantially similar provincial legislation. This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates and not as earlier announced, to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

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ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-13, an act respecting assisted human reproduction, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 4.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter into this debate from the point of view of an older person who has been around longer than most people and not only as a father, but a grandfather of eight. I have spent my entire professional life working with people. As a member of Parliament, almost half of the people who come into my office are not there for pure political reasons, but more for counselling or asking advice. I respect that and I am honoured to have them do so.

Canadians are concerned about this issue. We, as representatives of the people, should think very carefully about how we process and word the act so it is for all Canadians. I cannot for the life of me see how the federal government representing this portion of the health committee could ever come up with the idea of turning this problem over to the provincial governments, where there would be 10 different types of rules. I know it is not proposing that, but because it falls under health I would hope people would understand that this is a national program and a national policy that is being developed.

I want to make that abundantly clear because if we did not make that clear there would be so much misunderstanding that people would be blaming some of the pitfalls that they may encounter on the provincial government. All the reports and amendments of the committee that will be formed should come to the House. At the same time I am not denying that it should go to the Minister of Health, but it absolutely should come to the House.

If this is not a standardized procedure in the counselling, then that is a deep concern of mine. The people who would be doing the counselling for this particular issue, no matter which province they represent in the process of counselling, and I would imagine that is the route it would go, should be as unique and as close as it possibly could be across Canada. That is very important.

The standardization of the forms must be the same in British Columbia as they are in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is very important in Canada for the reason that if there is a fundamental error, then the blame would come back to Parliament. We would insist, therefore, that this be considered a national issue.

The public needs to be informed that this is not a business deal where someone says, "I cannot get pregnant and I want to make a deal", and so on. That is why we must ensure that the people who wish to enter into adoption and surrogacy are mature, well counselled, well trained and well informed before we proceed. This is not an individual business deal like going out and buying a car or changing a place of residence. This is very serious, indeed.

●(1655)

I would recommend to this committee, and I know that a lot of work has been done, that no member of this committee should have any commercial interest or profit motive whatsoever while sitting as a member of this committee. This has to be absolutely, totally divorced from the whole procedure: that he or she will not gain anything personally by sitting on this committee. Also, I think the choice of this committee should break down all political barriers. I see this committee as being made up of wise, experienced, prudent people, not necessarily just scientists or doctors, but people who have been around, as we say, and know the results of what could develop from this.

Let us get it right and let us get it right the first time. Let us not weaken our stance of what the committee represented or what they have spoken about, that most of all, members of Parliament, whether they like it or not, no matter where they are sitting in the House, will indeed be the subject of intense scrutiny if the proper procedures are not put in place the first time around.

●(1700)

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-13 again with regard to this group of amendments. My hon. colleague from Souris—Moose Mountain mentioned some of the issues which seem so apparent that we should not have to be discussing them. Somebody in an agency that will govern this reproductive technology part of our society should not have a vested interest in, let us say, a fertility clinic. That just makes sense. Sometimes we are accused of not making too much sense when we form laws, but this one does.

Government Orders

Before I start I would like to recognize the fact that at present the member for Yellowhead sits on the health committee and is handling the bill for the official opposition, but previously, Preston Manning, the former leader of our party, took on this file for the party. The work he did in bringing all this together, the knowledge he brought to the table, and the people he brought in to present their views on this issue resulted in probably one of the best committees and one of the best reports that was ever put together in the House, certainly in my time. I just want to recognize the fact that Preston Manning had a lot to do with this investigation and this report.

The issue of surrogacy is one that is a really important part of all of this. We feel that Motion No. 52 brought forward by the health minister wants to undo an amendment that was made at committee, and here we go again. I bring this up time and time again. There is good work done at committee. People are brought in as witnesses and an all party committee decides what would be best based on the information that has been heard, but then the minister comes along and tries to reverse the committee's work. To me that is just wrong.

Here is what the health minister is trying to do on the issue of counselling for people who want to be surrogates. The health minister has been saying that counselling should just be made available where needed, that it should not be mandatory, that people who go into this should have counselling just when needed. However, on this whole aspect of the reproductive technology debate, we feel that it should be mandatory, that people should know full well all the ramifications and all the problems that exist. Examples from other countries can be brought forward in regard to how complex this is, how it affects the mother and father, how it affects the people who are adopting and the relationships that occur, and how it can open up a real minefield of legal problems.

It is important that a lot of counselling goes into this. It should be mandatory. People going into this surrogacy situation should be very aware of all the problems. We will be opposing Motion No. 52 on those grounds: that the committee had it right and the minister is trying to go back on that.

We will be supporting Motion No. 55. This is the one that my colleague was referring to previously. It deals with what are to me pretty common sense issues on the standardization of forms and information disclosures to be used in the case of a donation. It just makes absolute sense to have that in the bill. That is why the amendment is there. We will be supporting it. The forms should be used in all fertility clinics and in any other transactions involving human reproductive material.

There have been problems in the past with poor record keeping at some of the sperm banks. Sometimes there is no way to track who the donors were and what the ramifications were when something went wrong. It is very important to have uniform rules and to apply them to all aspects of the industry. Whether it is a fertility clinic, a hospital or the agency, everybody should be playing under the same rules.

• (1705)

Motion No. 72 is another one that we have some problems with. This is a motion whereby the minister is trying to undo what the committee has done. One of the things the committee wanted to be absolutely sure of was that anyone who is to sit on the agency that

will control this reproductive technology system has no conflict of interest in any of the decisions to be made. One would think that would be a natural, but again it is not. It needs to be spelled out, but it is not. Let us just say that someone who runs a fertility clinic somehow gets on the board and decides on limits, such as how many embryo experiments could take place and so on. That needs to be clarified. It is not going to be in this legislation because the minister has tried to undo what the committee has done.

On the whole issue of the agency, the agency absolutely has to be separate from the influence of this industry. Limits need to be placed on how many embryos can be created. The problem I see in this is that if there is not some pretty strict control then we could be creating an industry trading in embryos. That is something we need to avoid at all costs. That is trading in human life.

There is also the whole aspect of the difference between an embryonic stem cell and an adult stem cell. Most of the advancement and good work and some of the hope that has been given to people with Parkinson's, MS and some of these terrible diseases have come from the work and research done on adult stem cells. The embryonic stem cell research is lacking. There are problems; people would have to take anti-rejection drugs for the rest of their lives. There has been so much advancement on the adult side that we feel there should be at least a three year moratorium on embryonic stem cell research until what has gone on and what is going on in the adult research side is explored in more depth.

Just in the last year there have been some startling and wonderful things happening in adult stem cell research. If we continue down that road and expend that effort to explore the adult side of it before we get into the embryonic side, we feel that there will be enough advancement and good things coming out that this whole embryonic issue, this aspect of creating life to destroy life, will not have to be brought into play.

These are just some of the concerns that we have with the bill and the amendments in Group No. 4. We will be speaking later on Group No. 5 as we move through the list of amendments.

However, once again, to me the whole aspect that a committee can sit and study and bring forward reports and amendments and then the minister can try to undo the committee's work is something that needs to be addressed, not at this point in time, but certainly it needs to be addressed in regard to the whole functioning of the House.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today once again probably in some shock, very much like I did at the beginning of the week when we discussed child pornography. Today we are talking about embryonic stem cell research. We are talking once again about a tiny cell which is a tiny baby. We are talking about life and every one of us in the House of Commons has to be so cognizant of that.

Government Orders

I cannot believe we would think about doing this in Canada. The other day in Saint John, New Brunswick I received in the mail a little plastic model which was supposed to be a 12 day old embryo. It was tiny baby. If everybody in the House saw it, they would not even talk about embryonic stem cell research.

The hon. member from the Alliance who just spoke said there was adult stem cell research and that there was no ethical problems with that. There is a much more promising future for it as well. We do not oppose that. As was stated, adult stem cells are being used today to treat Parkinson's, leukemia, MS and many other diseases as well. We are all in support of that. I feel very strongly that researchers should focus their efforts on adult stem cell research. There is a potential abuse of that tiny embryo which is a child. Conception is the beginning of life.

Let us look at the bill, the new group and Motions Nos. 52 through to 77. The minister wants to undo a committee amendment requiring board members of assisted human reproduction agency to come under conflict of interest rules. The health committee is saying that board members should not have commercial interests in the field of assisted human reproduction or related research. That is absolutely correct. They should not. The board members may talk about fertility clinics and biotech companies, and the board should report. Imagine an employee or investor in a biotech company with financial interests in embryonic stem cell research making decisions for Canadians on the regulation of such research. There is no way that should be done.

We are here to protect the unborn, that embryonic cell. I have been so dismayed in the past few months when I have looked at what has been happening and the direction in which we have been going. I look at our people here and at other young people. When I see these tiny babies, I ask myself how could they take a cell and stop the birth of that child. There is no question that we are in a high tech world and that we need lots of research. However adult stem cell research today is the way to go. There will be no negative debate on that.

When medical science is as advanced as it is in our age, there are times when we have to debate between what we can do and what we should do. That is exactly what we are doing tonight. Science and technology have given us another point of debate in this age old discussion. What we are debating today, with the amendments and the countless motions made by the members of the House related to it, is designed to regulate human reproduction, stem cell research and cloning. There is no way we should be into cloning.

• (1710)

I listened also to the state of the union address by the President of the United States. There is no way the states would allow cloning. Why would we in Canada? It was said that the legislation would put limits and offer safeguards against the kind of brutal science that some believe to be an acceptable means to an end. My immediate concern is that it allows embryonic stem cell research, the destruction of human fetuses, in the name of scientific research.

That is not Canada. That is not the kind of Canadian research we want. It is allowed, notwithstanding that adult stem cells have been

found to have many of the same medicinal qualities that researchers are looking for with embryos. What if someone said that the stem cells taken from healthy little three year olds offered the greatest promise to finding a cure for cancer?

I trust and expect that there will be changes to the bill before we are asked to pass final judgment on it, but I want to be very clear tonight. I cannot, as a matter of conscience, support a bill that allows embryonic stem cell research. I have tried to make my position on this issue very clear. Would anyone realistically say that it is okay to take the lives of innocent three year olds in the name of medical science? If it is brutal and barbaric to take the life of a little three year old, why do we, as a society and as a government, not say that it is just as brutal and barbaric to end the life of a healthy fetus in the mother's womb?

I say this to my friends in the House. We have a problem with the whole way we look at things these days. I have seen it just in the past week. Human embryos are human beings and no one should be debating it in the House and saying that they are not. Life begins at conception and we all know that. Look at the young people who are here today. Would we have taken their lives away from them? No. As we look at their faces, there is no way we would do that.

I oppose the destruction of human embryos for any reason, including scientific research. We have to ensure that those who have a financial interest in embryonic stem cell research do not make decisions for Canadians on the regulations of such research, including the definition of the word necessary as specified in clause 40. Imagine a director of a fertility clinic making regulations on limits of sperm and egg donations or the number of embryos produced for IVF treatments. Conflicts of interest need to be prevented in this legislation. We have to ensure that.

Where is the minister to explain why this amendment is even being put forward? What has happened to us here? Why are we allowing all of our principles to be wiped away?

The amendment would require the health minister to table an annual report. We want an annual report that is transparent around the regulations of assisted human reproduction and related research and we would prefer that the agency itself produce such a report. We want an independent agency, not one directed by the health minister or anyone else. When talking about the life of a person, we have to have that independent agency come to us in the House of Commons.

Government Orders

I pray that all members in the House will not support this new group. We support the majority of the amendments that have been brought forth by the opposition members, but there is a need for every member on the government's side to be responsible and protect that embryo, that little child. There is a need for every member to stand and say that they will not allow embryonic stem cell research but that they will allow adult stem cell research. We will agree to that. However no way will we take the life of a child for research.

● (1715)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to Bill C-13 report stage motions in Group No. 4, I have four motions that I have sponsored and I would like to briefly comment on one. Members have done an excellent job with regard to my motion, Motion No. 55, which requires standardized forms for fertility clinics.

There are 24 fertility clinics in Canada. Some are publicly funded and associated with hospitals like the fertility centre at the Ottawa hospital. However a number of other private fertility clinics, which members should be aware, refused to appear before the Standing Committee on Health to explain how they operated their businesses, to show us their forms and tell us how things were going. As a consequence, there are fertility clinics out there which are not sharing how they do their business with Parliament or with the people of Canada.

I believe it is very important for us to require standardized reports for all fertility clinics so that when our reproduction agency makes decisions on applications for research and all other matters related to the use of materials from fertility clinics, its judgments will be based on informed consent information which is standard across the entire industry. I hope I can have the support of all hon. members on Motion No. 55.

Motion No. 61 is with regard to requiring that this agency be subject to the Official Languages Act. I want to thank the member for Ottawa—Vanier, who is the chairman of the official languages committee of Parliament and who spoke very eloquently on it. I also give full credit to the member for Saint-Lambert who seconded the motion, but in fact it was her motion. As a member of the committee she was unable to make the motion. I made the motion on her behalf and I am pleased to advise the House that the government has agreed to support it.

Motion No. 75 deals with the chairman of the agency and how many times that three year appointment can be renewed. Presently how many times someone can be reappointed to that position is a little uncertain. I checked with the chair of the public accounts committee to inquire as to the standard terms with regard to the Access to Information Commissioner and similar agencies or quasi-judicial bodies. As of today, we have agreed that a period in total of six years would be most appropriate and most in line with other agencies. I have proposed Motion No. 75 to say that the term shall be three years plus the option of one additional reappointment. That would put it up to a maximum of six years.

Motion No. 77 calls for a dispute resolution mechanism to be established for the agency. I cannot tell the House how sensitive some of these matters will be when talking about donors of sperm and eggs, donors of embryos, in vitro fertilization processes, fertility

clinics, researchers and commercial ventures. There are many parties associated with the utilization of human embryos and the extraction of stem cells and their utilization down the line. There will be problems. People will have disagreements. There will be interpretations of this act. I believe it is very important that we have a dispute resolution mechanism built into the act which is a prerequisite for licensing. That will insulate the agency from extensive court actions that would be very disruptive to the orderly process of their operations.

I would like to comment on Motion No. 71. The Minister of Health has decided that she would like to delete the clause in the committee stage motion to establish gender balance on the board of directors. I do not think there is anybody who will argue that the particular act of drugging women to the maximum to get them to hyperovulate, to harvest their eggs, to fertilize them, to make them go through all kinds of invasive procedures and social and economic pressures is a women's issue.

● (1720)

There is no question in my mind that on this women's health and social issue that women must have at least 50% representation on the board of directors of this agency. I want to congratulate the member for Winnipeg North Centre who made that plea in committee and convinced the committee. We passed it on her behalf and I want her to know that we will support her 100% to ensure that the minister's motion to delete that clause will be defeated by the House.

Motion No. 72 from the same member, who worked very hard, says that conflict of interest in this matter is a serious issue. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, the patentability of some of these technologies and the related technologies that would flow from this? There would be pecuniary interests to many people along the line, many of which we would not know.

The committee said that we do not want the board of directors of any agency filled with people who are totally immersed and involved and know everything about it. We want wise people. We want people with common sense. We want people who would be objective in their assessments. We want people who would make good decisions. We want people who have no direct or indirect conflict or interest or opportunity to have pecuniary interests as a result of any licence or research.

Motion No. 72, made by the Minister of Health, which would delete that excellent motion of the committee proposed by the member for Winnipeg North Centre is a very important motion. When we raised this issue an official told the committee that:

For the full-time members the code of conduct requires a very extensive disclosure of financial interests, which is normally not considered appropriate for part-time members of a board.

He went on to say:

But the part-time members are governed by the principles of the code of conduct. I believe the logic behind the way code of conduct operates now is that the consequences of a conflict for a part-time member are not as significant as for a full-time president, who in this case is the CEO of the agency.

Part time members of the board who have a full vote—their opportunity for conflict is less than someone who is a full time member. Nonsense, I say.

Government Orders

He added:

Requiring the very extensive disclosure of financial interests may act to discourage people from taking on part-time positions that have very limited remuneration.

We have an agency of 13 people. I will find 13 people who are prepared to serve on a very important agency and who are prepared to take the time to declare their conflict of interest and ensure they do a good job.

Motion No. 72, on behalf of the minister, to delete the conflict of interest provisions must be defeated. I ask the House for its support to defeat Motion No. 72.

Motion No. 52, on behalf of the minister, amends the bill related to the provision of counselling services. We had enormous testimony to say that people who go through the in vitro fertilization process have tremendous pressures and consequences. They told us they did not know what was going on. They did not get the information. We had witnesses who told us that nobody told them about what was really going to happen.

The committee came up with an amendment to the bill which said that the agency shall ensure that people who go through the IVF process will get these counselling services. The minister wants to erase that and say that we would just make the services available. We put in "must ensure" for a reason and that is because it is absolutely necessary.

I therefore move:

That report stage Motion No. 52 be amended to add after the word "person" the words "and ensure that the person receives them".

• (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I declare the amendment receivable. The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The recorded division on the amendment stands deferred.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The next question is on Motion No. 53. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It seems quite clear to me that when you said "the nays have it", no one rose in the House. Therefore, the motion is disposed of. The Standing Orders are very clear on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Order, please. In response to the objection by the member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, when I put the question to the House, toward the end, at least five members rose halfway, to signal their intention. I accept that in fact they at least rose halfway.

• (1735)

[*English*]

The next question is on Motion No. 55. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

Mr. Myron Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am not new to this place, but I was always told that if a member wanted to cast a vote, whether it was a yea or a nay or a standing vote, that member needed to be in his or her seat to do so. I would suggest the justice minister sit in his own seat if he is going to be voting on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Even though the minister was not in his seat there were more than five members who stood up to ensure that there was a recorded division.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, once again, on a point of order. I repeat the previous point. You said that you saw five people rise. I am convinced, if you were to look at the videotape, that the five persons who rose were not in their place. Therefore, the amendment should be disposed of.

• (1740)

[*English*]

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I would appreciate some clarification on this. By normal practice on a voice vote the Chair has not insisted or required that people be in their seats when they yell out their votes nor when they stand to indicate their interest in a recorded division. If in fact there is to be a new practice, I would appreciate knowing it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Perhaps I should look for advice from the House. This is fairly new. The clerks cannot find it in the rule book. We just cannot find it at this point in time.

[*Translation*]

Is it agreed to proceed to the next motion?

An hon. member: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): As soon as we find something on this matter, we will get back to the House.

[*English*]

In the spirit of cooperation I would ask members from now on to be in their seats in order to voice their yea or nay.

The next question is on Motion No. 64. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Bélair): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 71. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I declare the motion carried.

(Motion No. 71 agreed to)

[*English*]

Ms. Bonnie Brown: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We had a list provided to us by the Speaker yesterday which had the motions in order. According to my reckoning we have missed Motions Nos. 53 and 61. In this last vote I do not even know which motion we were on. Are we doing every second one? How is it being done?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I was on Motion No. 71 to start with. I am told that in Group No. 4 this motion has been revised.

• (1745)

Ms. Bonnie Brown: Mr. Speaker, is this not the same chart we were given yesterday? What order are you doing it in? It would be helpful if you would call out the number.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): That was Motion No. 71.

Just to clarify, at this point in time we have dealt with the amendment to Motion No. 52—

An hon. member: No, not the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I am told that we cannot do Motion No. 52 unless we deal with the amendment first. We have done Motions Nos. 53, 55, 61, 64 and we have just done—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think that we forgot Motion No. 61.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The table tells me that we have done Motion No. 61. Let us check the blues.

Mr. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I just want to follow on the point of order raised by my hon. friend from Oakville by pointing out that I and other members with whom I have consulted are not at all clear what the last motion was that was put to the House.

I submit that on that motion at least the vote ought to be retaken, given the confusion at the table and with the Chair.

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, my point of order pertains to your understanding of Motion No. 71, which you indicated has been heard and voted on. First, there was confusion as to whether that motion had been put. Second, there were five members in the House who rose from all corners that you may not have seen. Therefore, I ask for a reconsideration of the placement of Motion No. 71.

Private Members' Business

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The only way that we can deal with this is to have unanimous consent to do Motion No. 71 all over again. Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1750)

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, before re-calling a vote I would request that you review the tape and the blues. You clearly read the number of the motion. You clearly read the motion. There was a vote on it and it was carried on division. I see no reason that we should retake a motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I vividly recall that we did Motion No. 71 but now there is no unanimous consent.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I have received the list that you are reading for calling the motions. I also have the list that was provided to us when the Speaker identified the motions that would be dealt with at report stage. Looking at the new Group No. 4, they are both in the same order.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you check the blues you will find that you went through and missed Motions Nos. 53 and 61.

If I am following, and I cannot look at each of the motions, but I know by number which one I will vote yes, yes, yes, no, which is what the whip does as well. If you miss one you throw off our voting pattern.

Having said that, the final point is that the member for Oakville and myself were two of the five people who stood but, I hate to say it, it appears that when you said yeas supporting the government motion you looked for the five people over there. You did not look over here. I know there were at least four or five people down there plus the two here. This is an important gender equity motion that needs to be debated further and voted on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Let us verify the blues. If there are any corrections to be brought about they will be.

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I guess I will have to wait to see where you are going with this. However when you rule that you are going to retake the vote on Motion No. 71 and then entertain further motions from members disputing that, then they are disputing the ruling of the Chair. The Chair has ruled that we will take the vote again, unless you are going to contradict yourself. You will get into real trouble if you start saying we are going to do something, ruling on it and then accepting disputes from wherever about revisiting it again. We need to have another vote because you have already ruled on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): If I could have the attention of the hon. member for Fraser Valley. We will have to check the blues. Initially I thought I had unanimous consent to go back to Motion No. 71 but the chief government whip stood up five or ten seconds after the fact and just about cancelled everything that we had tried to do.

Some hon. members: Shame.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Yes, that is right. I do not care what you say.

Motion No. 72. Have you all heard it?

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Mr. Speaker, there is a considerable amount of confusion here. I believe the last ruling was that you would go back and take a look at the blues and look at the confusion to see if you could clarify it.

The schedule we have is that this debate would go on until 5:53 p.m. We are now past that on the clock.

I would suggest to you that you do take the time to consider it and that we pick this up when we reconvene the debate. That would be my suggestion.

• (1755)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Here is a new one for you. It being 5:53 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

The House resumed from December 12, 2002, consideration of the motion that Bill C-206, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (persons who leave employment to be care-givers to family members), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to join the many speakers who have already dealt with the bill in its first hour of reading who were in strong and full support of this very worthwhile, honourable and noble idea brought to us by the member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore.

I should start by saying that as long as I have known the member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore he has raised the issue, going back five years, at our caucus and through the House. The hon. member has recognized the great need and great shortfall that exists within the current home health care system as it pertains to people who may need assistance to stay in their own homes. He has been a tireless champion of this issue. It must be very gratifying for him to sit here today and have this private member's bill votable, in its second hour of debate, and looking forward to seeing it through to its final, logical conclusion.

I should point out as well that the ruling party, the government of the day, has obviously seen the merits of the bill because, to its credit, it has taken the lead from the hon. member and in recent releases about the upcoming budget it has been alluded to, actually outlined, that the government will in fact introduce some measures, we are hoping, in the upcoming February budget that will address the issue of income maintenance for family members who need to take time off work to care for ailing relatives. I think that is worthy of note and worthy of applause but let us not forget where it comes from.

Private Members' Business

There is a saying "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has." I think we have a classic example today. I should mention that it was Margaret Mead who said that very worthwhile phrase.

The point of the bill, as I understand it, is that if a person has a family member, a loved one or a relative who is disabled or is suffering from an illness and needs to be housebound, that person can take leave from work and enjoy job protection. They will not risk their job by taking time off from work. They will be able to stay at home to care for an ailing relative and receive income maintenance from the employment insurance fund just as if he or she were unemployed or under the sick leave benefits of employment insurance.

The bill contemplates expanding the designated uses of the Employment Insurance Act. It would make an amendment necessary to list this as one of the categories or criteria under which a person would qualify for EI. However can there be any doubt, given the level of support that we have heard in the previous hour of debate in the House?

Can there be any doubt given the level of support that we are hearing from groups like the Canadian Association of Retired Persons which has a membership of two million or three million people who endorse the concept? Can there be any doubt when the Victorian Order of Nurses and the Canadian AIDS Society support this very idea? Many non-profit NGO groups have endorsed and proposed the very same measure as put forward by our friend, the member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore.

It is such a reasonable thing, especially when we keep in mind, and I remind hon. members, that the employment insurance fund is showing a surplus of \$750 million a month, not per year but per month, and \$7 billion or \$8 billion per year. What better use for that surplus than to provide true employment insurance for a person who needs to leave his or her place of work to care for an ailing loved one? I think it is entirely appropriate, logical and achievable because we know the money is there.

●(1800)

Let us remind ourselves where the employment insurance fund, which is in such a wild surplus, comes from. It comes from the contributions of employers and employees. Not one penny of money going into the employment insurance fund comes from the government. In other words, this will be a self-directed insurance program, if and when the unfortunate circumstance arises where a person has to take care of an ailing loved one.

I can relate to it even more because of my own personal experience. My mother is in a situation like this now that she is 84 years old and is disabled. She has been released from hospital and will be needing home care. The home care system, because we do not have a national home care system, is under enormous stress. My provincial home care system cannot provide enough home care to take care of a woman like my mother who needs attention 24 hours a day.

Were I an ordinary working person living in my home city of Winnipeg, and were this program available to me, I would be able to take time off in the same way one would take maternity or paternity leave, for a 50 week period which I believe is the new maternity rule. I would be able to relieve some of the stress on the current home care system that frankly cannot provide enough care, and very appropriately use the resources from the employment insurance fund so that I could take time off work and care for my ailing relative.

As I mentioned earlier, a key and integral feature of the hon. member's very well thought out bill is that there would also be job security provisions provided. My employer could not dismiss, penalize or discipline me if I found myself in this unfortunate position. Any reasonable thinking person would agree it would be fundamentally wrong to punish an individual if they had to take time off from work.

The hon. member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore says what a wonderful world it would be, what a better world it would be. I believe it is our job in the NDP caucus to raise that very issue. Think how much better Canada could be if we took some of these logical, achievable and very realistic steps to plug the holes and fill the gaps in our social safety net.

It is my great pleasure to add my name to the long list of Canadians, a network that the hon. member over the five years he has been advocating for this, has developed right across the country, people who are watching that debate tonight. It is my great pleasure to add my name to that very long list of Canadians who care about other Canadians and to push this bill forward to its next logical step. I anticipate hearing positive comments from members from other parties today. I defy anyone in the House to come up with any good reason that this should not become law in this country.

I speak on behalf of the constituents I represent in Winnipeg Centre, on behalf of the many families who find themselves in the situation in which I am right now with an elderly mother who needs home care, on behalf of the senior citizens from the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, and I believe the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada, CURC. Its 1.5 million members have also endorsed this very worthwhile and noble initiative. We would all be in good stead if we could rise, party after party and voice our strong support for a worthwhile and noble initiative like this one.

Canada could only be a better place. Show me the reason that we cannot do it. The money is in the pot. It is our money. It is not the federal government's money. We, speaking on behalf of Canadians, are saying that this money should be used for income maintenance for people when they need it and that EI money should not be used for anything else.

Let me use the minutes I have left to remind people that those dollars from employers and employees that go into the EI fund were put there to give employment insurance to people when they need employment insurance. It is not to be used for anything else. If we use employment insurance money for anything other than income maintenance, it is a breach of trust. In fact it is out and out fraud if we take money from a person's paycheque for a specific purpose and use it for something completely different. It is fundamentally wrong.

Private Members' Business

This use will be to provide employment insurance for people who need it because they have a sick family member to care for. It is appropriate. It is one of the contemplated designated uses of EI. It is the right thing to do. I urge strong support from all parties.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore for having launched this important debate on a matter that cannot help but interest large numbers of Canadians. It is, in fact, a matter of interest to the country as a whole, since it impacts upon the workplace, the health care system and society in general.

● (1805)

Last year I had an experience that made me more aware of this situation, when I was involved in fundraising for Leucan. I came to know parents who had left their jobs to be with a sick child and was able to see the many difficulties and constraints parents have to deal with during this painful time.

I must acknowledge that the bill introduced by my hon. colleague addresses concerns that are shared by the Government of Canada.

Bill C-206 needs to be seen in relation to the commitment made by the Government of Canada in the last throne speech.

In the September 2002 Speech from the Throne, the government announced its intention to make changes to existing programs. The government will also modify existing programs to ensure that Canadians can provide compassionate care for a gravely ill or dying child, parent or spouse without putting their jobs or incomes at risk.

These commitments show the government's concern with the difficulties being faced by many Canadians in balancing work and family.

There is no question about my colleague having his heart in the right place. He is concerned about the difficult situation being faced by nearly one in four Canadian workers. These workers or other family members are looking after a family member who is elderly, disabled or seriously ill.

My colleague's deep concern for these devoted people who are having to reconcile family responsibilities and work pressures is obvious. Theirs is a superhuman task.

It is also undeniable that the efforts required to establish this balance among all one's obligations, often incompatible obligations, is a heavy burden for many Canadians. We know that close to half of all Canadians experience average, if not high, occupational stress levels. That figure is close to twice what it was 10 years ago. We also know that women who have to reconcile work and family responsibilities are twice as likely to experience considerable stress.

This personal conflict does not only impact on individual health and well being, although this is enough of a concern in itself. Mental or physical health problems also have repercussions on the economy.

These repercussions are directly related to job satisfaction, to loss of interest in the organization and burnout, which can ultimately lead to someone leaving their job. Work-related absences represent approximately 20 million work days and \$2.7 billion annually for Canadian businesses.

Taxpayers are affected too: health care spending is increasing. The cost to the Canadian health care system resulting from the difficulties of balancing work and family life has been estimated at over \$425 million per year.

What concerns me is that the proportion of employees caring for both elderly parents and children has risen from 9.5% to 15% over the past decade. Given these demographic trends, the situation can only get worse. That is why the Romanow and Kirby reports recommend that the Government of Canada ensure income support and job security for caregivers.

What the member is trying to accomplish with Bill C-206 is an act of compassion worthy of praise. There is no doubt that we must look at this issue.

In the Speech from the Throne, the government recognized the vital importance of job protection and income support to workers whose family is in crisis because, for example, a loved one is seriously ill or dying.

I think that it is not acceptable to any of the members that 56% of Canadians dealing with these types of responsibilities must take time off work without pay.

That is why Human Resources Development Canada is developing policy options for a new leave for family reasons. Our first goal will be to effectively meet the needs of Canadian workers and their families.

● (1810)

We made a commitment to change our existing programs to allow Canadians to provide care for their child, spouse or parent who is seriously ill or dying.

I would like to mention one concern I have regarding Bill C-206: the fact of having to choose between work and providing care for a family member.

On this point, I am very happy that the member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore was open to amendments to his bill. This is something that could be done in standing committee.

According to the amendment proposed, people would have to leave their job or be laid off in order to receive employment insurance benefits.

I am sure that all members would agree that the last thing we want is for Canadians to have to choose between their job and being a caregiver for a family member who is seriously ill.

The new compassionate leave that our government is proposing would allow Canadians to miss work temporarily to provide care for a child, spouse or parent who is seriously ill or dying.

Private Members' Business

The benefits the government is considering providing would add to the support measures intended for families who need them the most. This would avoid having vulnerable families slip into poverty. This would also help Canadian companies keep their skilled employees, an issue of great importance for all employers at a time when the labour pool is diminishing and there are not enough qualified workers. Our compassionate approach to people's personal problems will contribute to a more productive economy.

Our initiative will also meet one of the key recommendations of the Romanow report and will help to achieve the targeted results in a federal jurisdiction.

I can assure the hon. members that we are consulting with provincial and territorial governments, employers and stakeholders in order to move forward with this initiative. We are confident that we will have their support.

According to a recent COMPAS survey, 60% of CEOs and senior managers of companies are in favour of the government providing temporary financial support to employees who have to stay away from work in order to take care of members of their immediate family who are seriously ill.

I should also point out that according to surveys, Canadian companies have adjusted well to the extended parental leave that we implemented a year ago to promote balance between family and work.

Of course we are well aware of the cost of such programs and we want to create a program suited to the most practical needs of Canadians.

We understand our colleague's generosity of spirit. We must turn good intentions into good results for Canadians who have to cope with serious family health problems. Our goal is to come up with an effective and economical initiative that will meet needs yet be flexible and practical.

Let us make no mistake. The Government of Canada fully recognizes the challenge faced by many Canadian workers. We are determined to give them the support they need to cope with this difficult situation.

I am certain that the new leave for family reasons that is being developed will take into account the hon. member's concerns. I hope I can count on his support.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-206. My colleague from Medicine Hat has already spoken to the bill. He is the critic for us in this area, but I also want to add my voice.

• (1815)

Bill C-206 is an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act for persons who leave employment to be caregivers for family members. First I want to first congratulate the member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore for bringing forward this

issue. I believe that every member of the House appreciates the hardship and adversity families face when one of their relatives is diagnosed with a terminal illness. Such families are confronted with very hard choices over how to care for that relative while at the same time providing for themselves and other family members. Those who choose to care for their own relatives are very courageous and deserve support from the state. This was recognized by both Kirby and Romanow in their reports.

Members of the Canadian Alliance strongly believe that the family is the essential building block of society. We therefore find merit in the idea of government assistance to Canadians who choose to leave a paying job to care for a terminally ill family member at home. I must say that this is already done by many people. They may not be leaving a paying job, but this kind of care is done regularly across the country even at this time.

Certainly the proposed legislation would reduce the financial stress for people who find themselves in that situation. In addition, such a program could provide substantial savings for public health care budgets. However, the primary issue is a recognition that the social and emotional benefits of loved ones caring for each other far outweigh placing an individual in institutionalized care.

By tying such assistance to the employment insurance program, however, the bill flies in the face of a Canadian Alliance conviction that the EI system has gone astray from its original objective to be a safety net for laid off workers. When the program was designed, the premiums were supposed to match the payouts. However, since its inception all kinds of new features have been tacked on and the Auditor General has raised objections that the intent of the Employment Insurance Act is no longer respected, particularly in regard to premiums equalling benefits. We in this party believe that EI should be brought back to a true insurance program for job loss.

I understand the desire on the part of some members to attach this initiative to the employment insurance program. The overcharging of employers and employees for this program resulted in a \$40 billion surplus at the end of the last fiscal year. This is \$25 billion over what is required as a cushion by the chief actuary of Human Resources Development Canada, who says that \$15 billion would be adequate to withstand any economic downturn.

Of course we as parliamentarians know that this is a surplus only on paper, because EI funds flow directly into general revenue. The \$25 billion extra in surplus has already been spent, mainly to pay off the debt, according to Dale Orr of the economic forecasting firm Global Insight. Even if the EI surplus were just sitting there, the Canadian Alliance believes the solution is not to tack on more spending initiatives to the program. Rather, the federal government should stop overcharging employees and employers and substantially lower premiums to reflect the benefits paid out.

Funding compassionate leave through the EI system has other drawbacks. I think it is important to point them out, because this may be well intended but may not have been thought out by the people proposing the legislation. It arbitrarily screens out those who are ineligible for EI: the self-employed. I do not believe that Canadians would support the disqualification of farmers, small business owners, contractors, consultants and truckers from such a worthy social program. They would be left out in the cold. Also, as the trend in business is toward hiring workers as independent contractors rather than employees, the pool of the excluded would likely increase dramatically over time. The same situation applies to parental leave, frankly, which we in the Canadian Alliance believe should be a separate program and not part of the EI system.

In addition, due to the demographics of an aging population, there is a very real possibility that attaching compassionate leave to EI may in time overburden the system, requiring premium hikes down the road.

● (1820)

In conclusion, I believe the intent behind Bill C-206 is on the mark and I applaud my colleague for his work on this issue. However, the fatal flaw of the legislation before the House today is that it uses the employment insurance system as its funding instrument. This initiative needs to be further studied and debated. In my view, the compassionate leave would be better financed through some joint provincial-federal agreement. I therefore cannot support the bill itself. I certainly believe in the intent, but the bill itself, in attaching it to EI, is not acceptable to the Canadian Alliance.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to speak in the debate on Bill C-206, which seeks to amend the Employment Insurance Act to allow persons qualifying as caregivers to leave their job to care for a family member.

The member's objectives in introducing this bill are highly commendable. For quite some time, we have looked for a way to help caregivers help their family. We know that there is no better caregiver than a family member to help someone who is ill either regain their health or die with dignity.

We also know that a program for caregivers would take a huge load off the health care system, the CLSCs and the clinics providing home care and so forth. Therefore, the principle of the bill is a good one.

The definitions are set out in section 1. Caregivers, clearly, are persons leaving their job—it says who leave their employment voluntarily or whose employment is terminated—but who want to care for a family member who is ill or who has an impairment as defined in the Income Tax Act.

Next, the bill gives a definition of family. Again, I see no problem with the way family is defined.

Private Members' Business

But I do see a problem with the fact that families are getting smaller and smaller and, quite often, caregivers have no family ties with the person they are in a position to care for.

There are all sorts of reasons. Perhaps they are neighbours who have become friends, or they are co-workers, one of whom has no family and the other of whom is able to help.

Families are much smaller than they used to be. The bill refers to siblings, uncles, aunts and so on, but nowadays many families are having only one child. We also must consider the fact that family members are not always very close.

There used to be the family unit and everyone lived together. It was not uncommon to see only a handful of surnames in a village. Nowadays, young people often have to leave the region they were born in to look for work elsewhere and they end up very far away. Parents stay all alone. Thought should be given to a mechanism that would allow the concept to be expanded so that someone who is truly close to the person in difficulty could come to their assistance.

There is something else that should be considered. I personally would be very much in favour of this bill being passed by the majority of the members in the House so that we can send the bill back to committee, study it in depth and look at how it could be improved in order to fund this program.

● (1825)

The hon. member from the Canadian Alliance said that it was a problem to take money from the EI fund. Certainly, if this leave were reserved only for people receiving EI benefits, there will be a problem. There are an increasing number of self-employed workers. They need to have access to the necessary funds to be able to become natural caregivers too.

Given that the EI fund has surpluses in the billions, maybe it would be good if the government could come up with a mechanism to transfer part of the EI surplus into a fund to run this program. It would be accessible to all Canadians who may have a certain type of need.

Sometimes a natural caregiver may incur expenses when leaving home to take care of someone else, even if they live close by. Perhaps there could be a way to help the natural caregiver even if he or she is not receiving employment insurance benefits.

Private Members' Business

The various aspects of this problem need to be looked at. We will most definitely have an increasingly aging population, and will need more help to take care of them. It seems to me important for a mechanism to be found that is adaptable enough to enable everyone to benefit from the program.

For example, we do not want to get into the same bind as with maternity benefits and special sick leave benefits, which are related to workers' accumulated leave, workers who have a job and can draw employment insurance. The program to be developed for natural caregivers must go far beyond that and be capable of encompassing all Canadians.

I am convinced that, if we all support this bill at second reading stage, if we refer it to a committee for consideration and for the necessary hearings to be held so that people can put in their two cents worth, we will really have done something worthwhile. The government will perhaps decide after all that to reverse its position and say to itself, "Now, to move ahead with this bill about caregivers, it strikes us as important to redraft it and produce one that reflects all the comments that have been made". So, one day, we will truly be able to help out natural caregivers.

[English]

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure to say a few words today on Bill C-206, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act.

We are told that the purpose of the bill is to allow a person who receives employment insurance to care for a family member with an impairment, or who loses a job because of the conflicting demands of the job in the workplace to get up to 52 weeks of employment insurance.

Many groups across the country, especially in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, would support this bill because it takes a great deal of pressure off the already ailing health care system. Also it gives us an opportunity to see something very rare in this country. It gives us the opportunity to see the provincial government get a break and probably the opportunity to upload onto the federal government for a change. That would be a very positive step indeed.

I was very disappointed to hear that the Alliance will not support this bill. This bill would help out families right across the nation. The Alliance tries to be known as a party of the family, but it has no intention of supporting the bill, which is shameful.

• (1830)

I want to congratulate my colleague, the member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, who initiated this bill. I wish I had done it instead of him but I do want to congratulate him for it because it is a very good move indeed.

In general, we can support this initiative as a party. I have always been in favour of laws and policies that respect and enhance the well-being of the family which is one of society's main building blocks.

The bill has some very good points. It restricts the role of caregiver to that of a close family member: a spouse, a common law partner, a child, a grandchild, a sibling. This is very positive. In other words, strangers need not apply. The bill covers family matters. It is not extended to the commercial home care enterprises. That is good because it protects the integrity of the bill itself.

The impairment involved must also meet the requirements of the Income Tax Act. If the government's definition is as strict as what it uses for the disability tax credit, we can be assured that we are not in any danger of having a major run on the EI account.

The caregiver has to have a major attachment to the workforce. In other words, someone who barely or rarely qualifies for EI benefits cannot use the caregiver provisions as a method of getting up to 52 weeks of employment insurance benefits.

The provision is not open-ended. A person cannot draw EI under this provision for more than 52 weeks in total in one or more periods over a two-year period. The bill makes provision for an extension of the 52-week period if a doctor certifies that the care provided is necessary for the health and safety of the person with the impairment or it has made it possible for the person with the impairment to avoid becoming an inpatient in a hospital or a long term care facility.

Finally, the bill requires any wages earned during the caregiver period to be deducted from the weekly EI benefits.

This is a good bill. I am hopeful the government will see fit to support it. I understand the bill will go to committee. Who knows, maybe a few changes will be made at that juncture.

In view of the fact that the government has been thinking out loud of late as to the possibility of covering home care under medicare, this bill certainly is in line with that thinking. It has the additional benefit of the home care being given by a close family member, which is very important to the individual receiving the care.

I want to revert to a part of the bill that requires a doctor's certificate for an extension of benefits over and above the 52 weeks stipulated over the two year period. It is not made clear in the bill, and hopefully it will be when it gets to committee, that a doctor's certificate is not required initially for the individual to get home care. That is one little thing we will probably have to look at. Hopefully when it is in committee some adjustment will be made.

It is a very good bill and we have absolutely no hesitation in supporting it. The bill will provide compassionate home care for family members. It will save money in the health care system and it will not be a very serious burden on the EI account. Unless and until home care is covered under medicare, this is a very good first step.

Private Members' Business

•(1835)

Ms. Judy Sgro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this issue today. I thank the hon. member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore for raising such an important issue as compassionate care. It is something many of us on both sides of the House are very interested in. I am pleased that members in the opposition party share the same values as our government and support the same issues that concern us.

The very idea that is raised in this bill was broached in the September 2002 Speech from the Throne. In it the government clearly stated its intentions to modify existing programs to ensure that Canadians are able to provide compassionate care for a gravely ill or dying child, parent or spouse without putting their income or jobs at risk.

While we applaud the member's open-hearted desire to extend benefits to cover care not only for immediately family but also for aunts and uncles, brothers, sisters, step relations and inlaws, we as the government must be fiscally responsible. We have to ask the question, has the hon. member tallied the potential costs of implementing the amendments proposed in Bill C-206? It is one thing to have one's heart on an issue but at the same time as one's heart is on an issue, one has to look at what the costs will be to the government and to taxpayers.

These costs would involve not only direct payments to caregivers but also the loss of the labour market of workers. In addition, employers would face added costs in seeking, hiring and training new employees.

Besides Bill C-206's wide scope of both duration of benefits and definition of eligibility, we also have to question the need for a person to quit or to be laid off in order to be eligible for benefits. Is this the way to go? I think it needs more work and more discussion.

Canadians want to work and they do not want to be faced with either of these decisions. It goes directly against the government's continuous efforts to support labour force attachment. In fact, the principle of encouraging Canadians to find and keep work was at the heart of the 1996 reform of the Employment Insurance Act. The working world is perilous enough without encouraging workers to leave it in the hope that when they are able to return, there will be a job waiting for them.

The government is compassionate. We recognize the stress caused by balancing home and work demands. We are constantly seeking ways to lighten this burden.

It was for this reason that we extended maternity and parental benefits from six months to a full year. The temporary support employment insurance provides insures against the risk of losing one's job completely as a result of a family situation.

As the Speech from the Throne indicated in September, we intend to put the same effort into finding solutions for persons caring for a gravely ill close relative as we put into finding appropriate solutions for workers caring for their new children.

It does mean that we must look at the broad spectrum of government programs. It means that we have to look at all of the

issues facing Canadians, including family, work and health. It means recognizing that people's lives are not neatly compartmentalized and that the same person is a worker, a parent and very often a caregiver.

We know that nearly three-quarters of the population of Canada who provide care to frail seniors are also employed and that the proportion of employees caring for both elders and children has almost doubled in the last decade. Caregiving is an issue that confronts a large segment of the population. It is also an issue that crosses the boundaries of work, family and health.

Commissioner Romanow in his recent report stated that home care quite simply could not exist in Canada without the support of social networks and informal caregivers. He noted that as much as 85% to 90% of home care is provided by family and friends.

When workers are faced with this degree of home care responsibilities, conflicts between work and care are bound to rise. Both the Kirby and the Romanow reports have raised the issue of income support and job protection for family caregivers.

•(1840)

I ask members to please note that these reports have linked both of those issues. They have not suggested, as Bill C-206 does, that choices should be made between work and caregiving. The government is examining just how to support people caught in this work/care dilemma.

We believe that an appropriate solution would be to design a measure that directly supports family caregivers. This measure would also permit Canadians to take a temporary absence from work to care for gravely ill immediate family members without fear of sudden income loss or job loss.

We welcome this opportunity to debate and explore solutions to the problems faced by employed caregivers. Bill C-206 gives us all the opportunity to enter into this debate and to look for the solutions needed to move it forward. We strongly believe that the federal government has an opportunity to lead by example in providing temporary income support and job security to working caregivers.

We are, of course, very conscious of the costs of such programs. The challenge parliamentarians have is to turn good intentions into good results for Canadians facing family health crises. The government's objective is to design a cost effective initiative that is responsive, flexible and practical.

Private Members' Business

In regard to the member who introduced Bill C-206, I think it speaks well of just what a caring individual he is. He has put the work into this private member's bill to put it on the floor and to move this debate along. Hopefully in the near future we will be able to have a program that meets the needs of Canadians and recognizes the challenges that many people are facing today.

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from the opposite side for her comments about this important bill. I also want to mention a comment made to me by one of her colleagues as I entered the House. The member talked about a situation that he faced 10 years ago. A mother came to him and said that she had a son who was dying. She wanted to stay home with her son, but she was not able to collect unemployment insurance. The only alternative was for her son to go into the hospital. There he went, at a cost of \$400 a day, and that is where he died.

When we think about that, it is so tragic at all levels, because in fact if she could have stayed home with her son the cost at that time would have been \$50 a day, I think, to pay for unemployment insurance while she stayed at home and cared for her son as he left the world. It would have been the perfect thing to happen. Everybody would have won. The hospital would not have had to pay out that additional money and we all know in our hearts that if someone is dying they should be with their loved ones in a home situation. That is what the bill is all about. It would institute a system which is caring and which meets the needs of Canadian families.

I am very proud that I have a colleague here who has done the work on this. He has in fact put it together in a way such that I think we can all see its possibilities and how it could in fact work to benefit all of us through a system that is already in place, the unemployment insurance system, which is there to provide insurance for people when they need to take time off, for example, to be with their newborn, which is something that the government has very rightly instituted recently, and a very progressive program it is. This bill is another piece of that program. It is at the other end of the spectrum, when people are leaving the world. Why not institute it at that point in the human journey as well?

I wish to express my thanks for this important bill and for the comments we have heard throughout the evening. The bill has had a very welcoming reception and I look forward to it going further, with more debate.

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to speak to the bill from my colleague from Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, and I echo the compliments that have been given to him about his social conscience.

• (1845)

Tonight we are debating private member's Bill C-206 concerning EI benefits for persons who are caregivers for family members. There is no doubt that the issue of compassionate care and the need to find a way to provide support and job protection for workers who have to take time off to care for very ill or infirm family members is a key one for the House to consider. We know that everyone has a

stake in workplace issues: employees and unions, employers and governments, and social commentators, for example. Virtually all have identified the need for some kind of compassionate leave program for Canadians who have to be away from work to provide needed care for family members.

We have a lot of evidence to look at. For example, almost one in four Canadian workers say that they or others in their households provide care to an elderly, disabled or seriously ill family member. We also know that almost half of Canadians feel moderate to high work/life stress. This is almost double the rate of a decade ago. We know that women are more than twice as likely to feel the stress of trying to blend work and personal responsibilities. Workers with dependant care responsibilities, such as children or elderly relatives, report even more conflicts between work and life than their fellow employees. The member raises an issue that is of great concern to Canadians and that is already high on the government's priority list.

There are numerous ways to look at this issue. To some it is an issue of work and life balance. To others it is an issue of workers' rights. More recently it was identified as a health care issue. For example, both Romanow and Kirby looked at it in the context of the health care system. Mr. Romanow told us that as much as 85% to 90% of home care is provided by family and friends. His report concludes that home care could not exist in Canada without the support of social networks and informal caregivers. Senator Kirby too recognized the fundamental role played by family caregivers in home care. His report specifically recommends that benefits be provided to employed Canadians who choose to take leave from work to provide palliative care.

The government appreciates the views presented in these reports and accepts that attention to the issue of support for family caregivers is an important element of the overall health care agenda, but we also see this as a key workplace issue, especially in the context of looming skill shortages in many Canadian workplaces.

We have some facts that illustrate the extent of this issue in Canadian workplaces. First, we know that 56% of family caregivers also work full time and another 12% work part time. We also know the following: 69% of women with children under 16 are part of the employed labour force; 75% of males and 62% of females who provide care to seniors are employed; and the proportion of employees caring for both elders and children is going up dramatically, in the past decade increasing by 9.5%, to 15%. One survey showed that 77% of Canadian workers who care for gravely ill family members have had to take some time off to provide compassionate care.

The need to balance caregiving and workplace responsibilities is one that has impacts on many individual Canadian workers and their workplaces and, given the demographics of our population, it seems safe to assume that the extent of the impact on individual workplaces will continue to grow.

The issue of being able to provide compassionate care and still stay attached to the workforce is one that has important implications for the labour market of this country. Our objective must be to make sure that the valuable skills and experience of employees continue to be available to the labour market. At the same time, we should try to support their need to meet vital caregiving responsibilities.

• (1850)

In other words, the government's response to this issue should meet workers' needs for temporary income support while they are away from work but at the same time should allow them to stay attached to the labour market. Governments are not alone in seeing this need. Employers too are recognizing the growing need to provide temporary leave to meet family responsibilities. For example, a survey of medium sized to large businesses showed that 59% offered some kind of family responsibility leave, although only about half had a formal policy. The survey also showed that typical employer workplace supports are largely unpaid, informal and very short term. In other words, there is growing recognition of the need for temporary workplace support for caregivers but not yet a systematic approach.

As we look at the issue from the perspective of the government, some key considerations emerge. First, although representatives of both employers and employees acknowledge the need for some kind of program to allow workers to balance their work and family responsibilities, no systematic response to the problem appears to be forthcoming from the private sector. Second, the typical need is for a temporary form of income support which will ensure that workers can retain their attachment to the labour force. Third, any solution must be affordable. Fourth, a program response from the federal government should involve both the public and the private sectors.

These are the key considerations that are guiding the government as an appropriate response is developed to meet the throne speech commitment to deal with this issue. I once again compliment the member for his work in the social field in raising this important subject for us to deal with in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I must inform the hon. member for London West that there are four minutes before we call the hour for private members' business.

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take four minutes now although that does not give me enough time to say what I would like to say about the bill.

I am very pleased that we are having this debate. I believe in compassionate care. I believe that with an aging population our country will have a need for it. Our demographics show us that by 2011 our population over 65 will have increased by 23%.

Private Members' Business

Who will be giving care? Typically it will be women. Who are these women? They are working in homes right now. We have changed over time.

An hon. member: Right on.

Mrs. Sue Barnes: Yes, and I have my financial hat on too. With my financial hat on, I must say to my hon. colleague that as it is written now, the bill would be very expensive. It would be coming out of a fund. However, I am saying that there is a need and I think that we can work toward this as a goal. I would like to see that coming very soon, but I am not in agreement with the way my friend's bill is currently written. However, I can assure the hon. member who sponsored the bill that as for the cause we can reach agreement over time with consultation.

Right now in Canada there is a void. What comes under the labour code? Only a couple of provinces are taking part. I have done some research. Apparently only six provinces in this country provide a short term period of unpaid leave when someone has extreme family responsibilities and/or emergencies and must provide for relatives. One of the problems I have with my friend's bill is that the definition of "relative" is pretty broad, but again, these are details and we can work on details.

The numbers of unpaid leave days under labour code protection right now are: three in New Brunswick; five in British Columbia; five, apparently soon to be doubled to ten, in Quebec; seven in Newfoundland and Labrador; ten in Ontario and twelve in Saskatchewan. If a person's mother or father has cancer, that leave will just not fix things.

One of the other areas I am concerned with is women working outside the home and the additional stress there will be if they have to quit a job. I am looking at something that still has a labour attachment, not a voluntary quitting. I think we add and stockpile stress in a home situation if we have to quit a job. We do not need that. Again, I think there are ways to work this out. All of us here can do things that are realistic, that can meet real needs inside families and that do not deprive workforces of highly skilled and trained individuals, including those men and women who must do caregiving in their homes. In fact, 81% of Canadians feel somewhat the same about this. When approached on this issue, they say that there should be a role for the federal government in this.

Now it is a temporary replacement, and I will be the devil's advocate here. I will argue that if I am the sick person, I am not entitled to the 52 weeks that this bill provides for the caregiver, with potential extensions, but quite substantially less than that. This is another issue that we will have to grapple with.

Private Members' Business

I am glad to have had the opportunity to participate today. I will be involved as this bill, or an alternate bill of the government, moves along. I suggest that we all work toward getting the issue resolved.

• (1855)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The member still has six minutes left if she wants to use them.

Mrs. Sue Barnes: Mr. Speaker, I will not use my next six minutes. I will let somebody else take the time to contribute.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the

order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to order made Monday, January 27, 2003, the House will now go into committee of the whole for the purpose of considering Motion No. 13, under Government Business.

[*Editor's Note: For continuation of proceedings see Part B.*]

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, January 29, 2003
(Part B)**

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, January 29, 2003

[Editor's Note: Continuation of proceedings from Volume A]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

IRAQ

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 13, Mr. Bélair in the chair)

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That this Committee take note of the situation in Iraq.

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, when the House last debated the question of Iraq in early October we grappled with the challenges posed by Iraq's disregard for its Security Council obligations. We considered the long brutal history of Saddam Hussein's regime, the importance to all of us of seeing that it is disarmed, the role of the United Nations in assuring our collective peace and security, and our shared humanitarian concerns for the people of Iraq.

During that debate I asserted that Canada would seek a peaceful resolution to this crisis through UN weapons inspectors and through Iraq's active and complete support in the process of disarmament.

[Translation]

The government's objective remains the same, because our faith in the United Nations was well placed. The Security Council met the challenge of handling the problem in Iraq by passing resolution 1441 unanimously. This resolution has allowed arms inspectors to return to Iraq and has given the Government of Iraq one last chance to comply with its obligations.

Inspectors returned to Iraq at the end of November after a four year absence. They have since been working on the job assigned to them by the Security Council. Once again, some expressed doubts about the inspectors' ability to carry out their responsibilities and predicted that the mission would soon fail. Others complained that it was nothing but a trap set for Iraq and that the operation was nothing more than a provocative western scheme to spy on Baghdad.

However these skeptics were wrong, my friends. The inspection teams did good work under very difficult circumstances, having carried out more than 300 searches and seizures. We congratulate them for their professionalism and their dedication. They managed to gain access to sites where previous inspection teams were not

allowed. They made important discoveries, including empty chemical weapons shells. They are demonstrating the objectivity required to show that this process gives Iraq a fair chance.

In a nutshell, the inspectors have shown that they have the ability and the determination needed to carry out their work, provided they have the support they need from Iraq. Therefore, when Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei ask for more time, our government believes that we must give it to them.

● (1900)

[English]

At the same time, as the Prime Minister has said, this is not an open ended process. It can succeed only if Iraq understands that this is its last chance to come clean and acts accordingly. Unfortunately, the jury is still out whether the Iraqi government is willing to embrace this final opportunity. The inspectors have bluntly criticized the Iraqi government's approach to inspections. As Dr. Blix said in his report to the Security Council on Monday:

...resolution 1441 states that this cooperation shall be "active". It is not enough to open doors. Inspection is not a game of "catch as catch can".

The government believes that Iraq must actively provide evidence and answers to all of the many questions still outstanding. Inspectors are not satisfied with Iraq's answers about what happened to tonnes of deadly nerve agent. They are still waiting for the real story behind Iraq's ballistic missile program. They need answers about biological and nuclear weapons research. They are asking these questions because resolution 1441 demands answers.

We must remember that resolution 1441 is not a paper tiger. It warns of serious consequences if Iraq does not comply. The United States, the United Kingdom and some others have begun preparing for the potential use of force against Iraq should this be necessary. Canada has been engaged in prudent military to military discussions with the U.S. to be prepared, if necessary, as well. This credible use of force has been an essential support for diplomacy as it keeps the pressure on Iraq to comply. I assure the House however that no decision on the use of force has been taken by the government and we see it as a very last resort.

Government Orders

The government has been criticized by some for inconsistencies on its policies on Iraq. However, our policy is unchanged since the last debate. Some insist that Canada should commit now to the use of military force before all of the evidence is in or before the UN process has had the opportunity to reach a conclusion. Others say that Canada should ignore what the UNMOVIC and the IAEA may find, ignore our duties as a member of the UN, and announce now that we will never play any part in the enforcement of Iraq's Security Council obligations.

That is not what the government believes and it is not what I believe. I do not believe it is what Canadians believe. Canada must continue to seek a peaceful resolution to the challenge posed by Iraq's non-compliance with its international obligations. Our objective is the complete elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction by peaceful means and in accordance with Security Council resolution 1441. In this way we believe war can be avoided.

This is not the time to abandon the UN process, at the very point when the inspectors are beginning to make real progress and when concerted international pressure is finally beginning to bring about Iraqi cooperation, begrudging as it has been. Inspectors must be given the time they need to use every tool at their disposal. This is the message I will deliver to Secretary Powell when I see him tomorrow, and this is the message that the Prime Minister gave President Bush when they spoke last week on our relationship.

Ours is a solid relationship based on a commitment to common values and it permits this sort of exchange and allows for respect for each other's views together with an understanding of each other's concerns.

Allow me to address the possibility that force would be used to back up the Security Council resolutions on Iraq. It may well be that the weapons inspectors will find evidence of Iraqi non-compliance. Certainly the record of Iraqi compliance is not good. Should that happen, we must be ready to back up our words and principles with action. The Security Council has unanimously agreed that Iraq will face serious consequences if it violates its obligations.

Even as we recognize that war is not inevitable, we must also accept that a peaceful outcome depends critically on whether Iraq begins to co-operate fully and actively. We must not rule out a peaceful resolution, but neither can we rule out the use of force.

As we in the House know, Canada and the United States are best friends and allies. We have a long history of cooperation and partnership, and on matters of values we see eye-to-eye. However friendship and alliance do not imply that we two sovereign countries must adopt identical approaches on all issues. It is in the discussion and debate of differing views and the pursuit of varied but complementary approaches, that we are able to offer to each other the best kind of advice and support.

An independent foreign policy for Canada benefits the United States as well as ourselves. We value our differences as does the United States. Our partnership is the better for it.

● (1905)

On Iraq, we share the same goal: the complete and verified disarmament of Iraq through a peaceful UN process.

Last night I watched President Bush speak of how the United States will make up its mind. He said:

Yet the course of this nation does not depend upon the decisions of others.

Canadians expect no less of their government. Why would Americans expect anything less of ours from what they demand from themselves?

The government is working closely with our friends and allies around the world who share our desire for a peaceful outcome, and our goal of achieving this through our multilateral institutions. The countries of the region have been engaged in this important effort to convince Saddam Hussein that for the good of his people, and for the stability of the region, Iraq must comply with its international obligations.

They, like us, look forward to a time when Iraq will be reintegrated into the international community as a peaceful and prosperous nation. The Iraqi people deserve no less.

Many have asked whether Canada would insist on a second resolution before supporting the use of force against Iraq. To my mind the pertinent question is whether the current process established by the existing council resolution 1441 enables us to address the two fundamental issues we face: whether Iraq is in violation of its disarmament obligations of the world community, and whether the use of force is the only way to bring it into conformity.

Resolution 1441 does enable us indeed to address these two issues. Resolution 1441 has returned inspectors to Iraq, strengthening their hand and giving them new tools. Resolution 1441 with its clear statement of serious consequences of non-compliance, together with a credible threat of force, has compelled the measure of Iraqi compliance we have seen to date. Resolution 1441 lays out a process by which the council will receive reports from the inspectors and then consider the appropriate course of action, which might well involve another resolution.

Resolution 1441 has brought us to where we are today, just as it lays out the way forward. Let us focus on using resolution 1441 to its full extent before we speculate on what else might or might not be necessary.

War is not inevitable, but for conflict to be avoided Iraq must fully comply and act with the UN. Canada will stand together with the world community to see that it does.

I will conclude by echoing the views of Secretary General Kofi Annan on Monday when he said:

I really hope that Iraq will comply and we will be able to get on and disarm Iraq peacefully. I have not given up on peace.

We should not either.

Government Orders

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I listened with close attention to what the Minister of Foreign Affairs had to say. I noticed that he went to great lengths to say that the government has not changed its position. However, I could produce a whole series of quotes over the past two months not only illustrating such changes, but particularly in the tone. The tough and clearer tone that the minister employed tonight is somewhat refreshing.

The Canadian Alliance has asserted that we should be working more closely with the American and British allied coalition on putting maximum pressure on Saddam Hussein to disarm. We have called for participation in the predeployment exercises. The government appears to date to have rejected that position. However, I note that the minister talked about consultations between the United States and Canada and I forget the exact wording, but on military preparations.

Is the minister in effect saying that the government is involved in a limited form of predeployment activity?

• (1910)

Hon. Bill Graham: No, Mr. Chairman, I would not put it that way to the House. I have made it very clear in my speech, the government has always made it clear and the Prime Minister has said on many occasions that if force is deemed necessary to force Saddam Hussein in Iraq to disarm in conformity with resolution 1441 and the United Nations process, Canada will be there.

In the process therefore of examining what facilities, prudent military planning would suggest that we must look at assets, we must decide, we must talk with other countries and we must look at what we would do. The Minister of National Defence has been able to do that, but this is without any commitment of any kind. This is not of the nature of military dispositions, of moving troops or anything of that nature.

We strongly believe that, while the threat of force is a part of enforcing diplomacy, in these circumstances it is very important that the world know that it is the Security Council and the United Nations process which will provide the way out of this impasse and if we operate within that process, we do so in a way which will ensure not only that the use of force, if it is required, will be legitimate. However ultimately the resolution of this will mean that in the Middle East and in the rest of the world there will be stability rather than the fear of invasion by other countries. This is the most important principle. We have always been guided by that. Our actions have been careful and our words have been careful. We remain within that context.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Chairman, the minister has spoken about the importance of working within the United Nations context. Could he explain to the House why the government so far has refused to be unambiguous about a position that it would resort to force only within the context of the United Nations? Why the ambiguity? Could he explain that to us?

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Chairman, I do not think the hon. member is interpreting the words correctly. We have been totally unambiguous in terms of our wording, saying that we will only operate within the framework of the United Nations process. That

framework is presently laid out by resolution 1441 and that resolution is still being examined.

The President said last night that Secretary Powell will go to the United Nations Security Council on February 5, lay out a case, set out with the security council what they might do and which way they might move given the present circumstances. We heard the report of the two inspectors the other day. I spoke to Dr. Blix myself the other day and we expect a new report on the 14th of February.

Nobody in the United Nations or in the world in my view, such as the United States or France or any of the other powers that are expressing this opinion, or this preferable option or the other, is saying that at this point the use of force is inevitable or that this is the way we will go. Everybody is seeking to operate within that framework and within that context. That is exactly where Canada started when the Prime Minister spoke to Mr. Bush some time ago and that is where we remain. This is the best way to ensure that we will get to the end where we have a credible, legitimate result.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chairman, yesterday, after the state of the union address, it was quite clear that the United States still reserved the right to attack Iraq on its own or, to use the President's words, with a willing coalition.

Now, it seems that the minister is saying that Resolution 1441 is sufficient to attack Iraq. He says that he will be meeting shortly with Colin Powell. When Colin Powell asks him the question, "Are you following us to Iraq, unilaterally, without waiting for another UN resolution?", I think that after what he just said, the minister will answer, "Yes, I will follow you to Iraq". Am I mistaken?

• (1915)

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Chairman, I am running a strong risk of heading into hypothetical territory. Like my hon. colleague, the Minister of National Defence, I recognize the danger of such a step. But I can assure you that I will tell the Secretary of State, Mr. Powell, that the long-term security of the United States and the world means that we must be guided in this affair by the process set out in Resolution 1441.

We will see what happens when Mr. Powell appears before the Security Council. Their actions, their deliberations and their decisions must be carefully examined. They have the power. Resolution 1441 clearly indicates to Iraq that it must comply, failing which there will be serious consequences.

All these questions are currently being decided by the Security Council. Let it examine this process, back it and then see to it that Iraq is disarmed and the nations of the world protected.

[English]

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Chairman, to the minister, I think it is fair to say that every member of the House shares the fundamental objective of ridding not only Iraq of weapons of mass destruction but that region and ultimately the planet. The minister was an eloquent advocate of eradicating all nuclear weapons from the planet and indeed of strengthening and protecting the Iraqi people from the brutality to which they are subjected and the human rights violations.

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That must be done within the framework both of the United Nations and of course with respect to international law. This brings me to my questions.

My first question is with respect to the issue of a second resolution. On this issue the minister has still not been clear. Should it be the case that the international community through the Security Council believes that there has been a material breach under the terms of resolution 1441, both France and Germany have stated clearly and unequivocally that they believe the use of force would not be accepted without an additional resolution to authorize that.

What is Canada's position on that and what is Canada's position with respect to the fundamental right of members of the House to vote on whether to send men and women into war?

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Chairman, to answer the first question, I have tried to make it clear that what is happening is that we are seeing as we evolve the process of resolution 1441. When resolution 1441 was drafted, it was drafted in such a way which enabled a certain freedom of the Security Council to act in the circumstance of the future. This is why the government has been very careful never to be drawn into speculation as to what would happen, if this happened or if that happened.

We cannot speculate because we will never know the exact conditions that are set. That is why we have said we support the process and we support that the Security Council is engaged in that process at this time. The Security Council will be the master of the need for a second resolution. That will be determined as we go forward, when Secretary Powell goes before it and others make the case.

In our view that case remains to be made. That case, as President Bush said last night, will be made, but he too said that it remains to be made. Secretary Powell has said that force will be used if necessary. It will only be necessary if Iraq does not conform or if the world community judges that it is necessary.

That is in the process of resolution 1441. That is why we support that process. That is why we refuse to be drawn into speculation as to what other events might be necessary in a hypothetical situation in the future.

In terms of the House, the government has always respected the House. We have engaged in debates in the House. We have engaged in discussions in the House of matters of the highest importance.

I personally regard the decisions and deliberations in the House with the highest of respect. I regret the fact, that I will not be able to stay tonight because I have to go to Washington. However I assure colleagues that the views of the House are considered by the government, but the government was elected to take its responsibilities.

The Prime Minister has said that the government was elected to take its responsibilities and it will take responsibilities on decisions. Whether to deploy the troops of Canada will be made by the government. In the event that the government's choice is unwise, the House of course can always have non-confidence in the government. However the government will take its responsibilities to deploy its troops as elected by the people of Canada to do so.

● (1920)

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I welcome the opportunity to once again address the issue of Iraq.

Let me first recap the position I laid before the House on October 1, 2002. I argued then that the time had come for Canada to pledge support to the developing coalition of nations, including Britain, Australia, the United States and others, in their determination to send a clear signal to Saddam Hussein that failure to comply with an unconditional program of inspection would justify action to remove Iraq's suspected weapons of mass destruction.

I noted that the position is justified in international law. The 1991 gulf war in which Canada participated did not end in an armistice. It ended in a ceasefire agreement in which Iraq agreed to a series of United Nations resolutions requiring the unconditional and unrestricted inspection of any and all Iraqi sites. Iraq has defied this and numerous other resolutions over the past 12 years, including non-compliance with the current UN resolution 1441.

I noted that there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein operates programs to produce weapons of mass destruction. Experience confirms this. British, Canadian and American intelligence leaves no doubt on the matter. Saddam Hussein's continued non-compliance and non-cooperation with the United Nations only confirms this information.

Finally, while I noted and I continue to note that Canadians do not want to see war, they do want to see Canada's national security interests and international values upheld. The limits of UN declarations are not the limits of Canadian foreign policy or our security needs. While Canada has always strived to work with the United Nations and other multilateral bodies, we have also pursued independent policies with our allies.

Based on these arguments, I gave the government the following advice in October.

First, should Saddam Hussein not fulfill an agreement to an unconditional and unrestricted access to UN weapons inspectors, Canada should stand with its allies in spelling out clearly to Saddam that failure to comply will bring consequences.

Second, should the UN Security Council issue a declaration to demand Iraqi compliance and should Iraq fail to meet those conditions, Canada should stand with its allies in telling Saddam once again that failure to comply will bring consequences.

Finally, should some UN Security Council members falter in re-emphasizing their own past declarations, Canada should stand with its allies in ensuring that Saddam understands once again that failure to comply will bring consequences.

Government Orders

Now, four months later, let me be very clear. Enforcing UN resolutions and getting Saddam to disarm could still be done without war. For this to occur, the international community must stand four-square behind the existing UN resolutions and we must understand the nature of Saddam Hussein. Ironically, it was our current Prime Minister who said this in 1998:

Make no mistake, Saddam's behaviour to date indicates that he will not honour diplomatic solutions so long as they are not accompanied by a threat of intervention. The least sign of weakness or hesitation on our part will be interpreted as incitement.... We believe that Canada cannot stand on the sidelines in such a moment.... Canada will be counted.

If the international community understood this better today, and if the Canadian government kept true to the Prime Minister's own words, then we would stand a good chance of avoiding war. Only with a credible threat of force behind resolution 1441 does the world stand a chance of avoiding war.

Instead, what we have are members of the international community failing to stand behind UN resolution 1441. They are failing to back the multilateral coalition including Britain, Australia, the United States, Spain, Italy and others, that is prepared to show Saddam a credible threat of force by redeploying in the gulf region.

Canada can most assist the United Nations process by standing unequivocally with countries prepared to act to remove Saddam Hussein and his weapons. The failure of Canada to stand with its allies can only lead to one of two possibilities.

The first possibility is that the entire international community decides not to enforce Security Council resolutions. This would leave the tyrant Saddam Hussein in place, but worse, he would be emboldened as a threat to the region, his own people and eventually to world stability. His known ties to terrorist organizations and his continued development of weapons of mass destruction would accelerate, leaving the world a less safe place and heightening the possibility of a repeat of September 11 or far worse.

We should be under no illusions. As the nation closest to the United States geographically, culturally and economically, we will inevitably be subject to the full consequences of any attack on the United States, if not also subject to any attack itself.

With or without such an attack, the failure to enforce resolutions to disarm Saddam Hussein will mean the UN itself will cease to be a credible body in world security affairs. This failure would directly parallel the failure of the League of Nations to address the emergence of global fascism in the 1920s and 1930s.

The second and more likely possibility of the failure of the world community as a whole to enforce disarmament of Saddam Hussein is that the allied coalition led by the United States and the United Kingdom goes to war with Iraq with the goal of disarming this evil regime.

This would force Canada to choose between its most important and closest allies and many of our other friends around the world. This would force us to choose war or to avoid participation in it.

There can be no mistake that war has been made more likely by the failure of some members of the international community to stand behind UN resolution 1441 and its predecessors in presenting a credible threat if Saddam fails to comply.

Let there also be no mistake that if the U.S. and the U.K. lead a coalition into Iraq, this will be fully defensible under existing UN resolutions, even if the UN does not sanction the action with yet another resolution by the Security Council.

What position should Canada take under such circumstances? More important, how should it decide its position? The answer: It should be clear and it should demonstrate leadership.

• (1925)

This party will not take its position based on public opinion polls. We will not take a stand based on focus groups. We will not take a stand based on phone-in shows or householder surveys or any other vagaries of public opinion.

We will take our position the way real leaders and great nations make decisions at such moments in history. Real leaders, and I do not mean brutal psychopaths like Saddam Hussein, real leaders like ordinary Canadians, do not want war. They never have.

My parents and my grandparents and their many friends and relatives of their generation have always told me that war is at worst horrific and at best a terribly inadequate way of dealing with the problems of humanity. They also told me that Canadians have nevertheless gone to war many times. In fact, they remember when Canadians were among the leaders in war, when it became the only option for the long run security of Canada and the world.

In my judgment Canada will eventually join with the allied coalition if war on Iraq comes to pass. The government will join, notwithstanding its failure to prepare, its neglect in co-operating with its allies, or its inability to contribute. In the end it will join out of the necessity created by a pattern of uncertainty and indecision. It will not join as a leader but unnoticed at the back of the parade.

This is wrong. It is not fitting with the greatness of our history or with our standing as a nation. We need to be standing through tough times and taking tough decisions.

We in the Canadian Alliance will continue to take tough public positions and urge the necessary military preparations that make the avoidance of war possible. I can only urge and pray that our government will do the same.

• (1930)

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for the exposition of his party's position. It was clear and helps us understand the debate in this House.

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The question I have to ask him since he does not want to listen to the voices of Canadians about where they want to go about an eventual conflict is, why is he listening to the voices of other countries about where they want to go? My precise question for the Leader of the Opposition is, is he satisfied at this time that there is sufficient proof that a war to be taken by a coalition of allies without the authority of the United Nations and clearly in opposition to the will of the Security Council would be justified and would that in his judgment be the support of resolution 1441 of which he spoke in this House?

Up until now we have heard very little about the United Nations from the party opposite. We have heard a great deal about why we have to show leadership and act with certain other allies. Now if we are going to be with the United Nations, where are we? Is the proof there now? Can we move now? Does the Leader of the Opposition advocate a war now?

Mr. Stephen Harper: Mr. Chairman, first I did not say that we ignore the voices of Canadians any more than we ignore the voices of other nations around the world, but in the end we take this information and we do what we believe is in the best interests of the country and the world in the long term when it comes to these kinds of matters. I would say that I am not sure that the minister himself enunciated a position any different. The difference here is that we of course would be willing to put that position to a vote in the House of Commons.

I think the minister answered his own question. Nobody, including the allied coalition, thinks that we are prepared to enter a war today. Secretary Powell is returning to the United Nations Security Council for further discussions and we are going to receive further reports from Hans Blix and the UN inspectors team. We will make our judgments on the facts at that time, but like the position the government has finally come to, and clearly I believe, we do not rule out any further options as a sovereign country.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Chairman, I am quite surprised. On most domestic issues the leader of the official opposition seeks Canadian input in public but when it comes to a serious issue that could have devastating effects for the world not only in the near future but in the long term future, he does not think it is important to seek Canadian public opinion, but that is beside the fact.

Does the hon. member believe that a second resolution from the United Nations would be warranted in the unlikely event or the likely event that there may be conflict in Iraq? Does he believe that there must be a second resolution as France and Germany have indicated?

Mr. Stephen Harper: Mr. Chairman, I repeat my earlier answer that one does not say one is not interested in public opinion, but one is not a prisoner to it.

I notice the NDP already has taken a position on a future course of action that does not involve any input or opinion from either the Canadian public or the United Nations. The NDP will be opposed to war in Iraq regardless of the circumstances, just as it was in 1991, which quite frankly would have left Saddam Hussein today in charge not only of Iraq but Kuwait as well.

In terms of the second resolution, I think I was clear in my speech. We do not believe a second resolution is warranted. There have been a series of resolutions going back to the terms of the ceasefire in the gulf war in 1991. It is clear to us that a second resolution is not legally required. Whether it is advisory or not is a decision the Security Council itself and the allies are going to have to take.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I feel like I am in the lion's den here. I still want to share my opinion and ask the leader of the official opposition a question.

I understand that the leader of the official opposition does not believe very much in the UN and I think that is unfortunate. It is the mechanism the international community has created to resolve conflicts. He even finds that the international community is too timid to enforce resolution 1441. The hon. member says that Canada should join its allies in launching an intervention solely on the basis of resolution 1441.

I would like to ask him who Canada's allies are. If the United States decides to go to war against Iraq on its own, what about the other allies? The United States is not Canada's only ally. I want to know what the hon. member understands by "allies". If all the allies say no and only the Americans say yes, is he still prepared to follow them in a war against Iraq?

● (1935)

Mr. Stephen Harper: Mr. Chairman, clearly the seating arrangement this evening lends new meaning to the term "coalition".

Let us talk about the importance of the United Nations. Since the gulf war in 1991, it has passed some 15 resolutions. It is important for the UN's credibility to have these resolutions respected. If Saddam Hussein can ignore some 15 resolutions on this matter, what value will the United Nations have in the future? That is an important question.

In my opinion, if the United Nations cannot act in the future, it is up to each sovereign nation to take its own decisions. The United States is going to, and I think that Canada and the other countries will take their decisions under these circumstances. A decision has not been made yet. We will consult with our allies and our past experiences will help us to decide on such an issue.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for adding some excellent information to the debate. Perhaps he could add some more information on a couple of points that I am sincerely interested in.

I know that I asked him if he was a supporter of democracy, he would say yes. In my riding this particular issue is the first one that I can ever remember on which 100% of my constituents who have contacted me are in agreement. They are not in favour of going to war at this time. I know therefore that thousands upon thousands of constituents in Canadian Alliance constituencies have also given that input to their members. I would like him to let us know some of the things he is telling those people.

My second question is related to resolution 1441. He said it was non-compliance—

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The Deputy Chairman (Mr. Bélair): I am sorry, I will allow one question only.

Mr. Stephen Harper: Mr. Chairman, I think we have found not dissimilar things. It is clear, as I said in my speech, that Canadians do not want war. On the other hand Canadians do not want Saddam Hussein to continue programs of weapons of mass destruction, to ignore United Nations resolutions, and to be able to continue as if United Nations resolutions simply did not exist.

Obviously the way out of this is to have Saddam Hussein comply unconditionally without war. We may have to choose between those things. I hope that if we choose between those things the member thinks about the long term interest. We must do this in democratic countries. It is not easy in democratic countries. We stumbled into the second world war because of a bunch of politicians could not decide to take tough action when it would have been easy.

We must assess for ourselves the state of the world, the state of the threat, and we will have to make a decision. Surely the hon. member will not make that decision just based on who calls his office more frequently that particular day.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Chairman, I have listened very carefully to the Leader of the Opposition. I do not have any doubt that Canadians will be shocked to hear the position that the Canadian Alliance has laid out tonight. It is a total disrespect for the United Nations and the fact that a second resolution is not needed, a disrespect for international law, and a disrespect for Canadian sentiment on this issue. He can disregard polls or householders, but I can tell him that across the country there is a strong feeling that people do not want to see this country go to war.

On what basis does the member justify a violation of international law just so we can stand with the Americans in a unilateral action?

• (1940)

Mr. Stephen Harper: Mr. Chairman, as I said in my speeches in October and tonight, I believe the position we have laid out is consistent with international law. I also believe the worse thing that could happen to the United Nations would be for members of the international community to disregard and fail to enforce, if necessary, about 15 resolutions over the past 12 years.

It is always easy to get up and chant “no war, no war, no war”. Nobody wants it. However I wonder if that member is equally comfortable with telling her constituents and the country that if Saddam Hussein continues on a path of developing weapons of mass destruction with international terrorist links there is absolutely nothing we or anyone else will do about it.

That is the position of the NDP. Its members have already said they do not care about public opinion or about the resolution of any member of the United Nations Security Council.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Chairman, tonight we are debating an important subject, the situation in Iraq. We are debating about war and peace, about war or peace.

For weeks now, people have been asking me about this. They are worried and ask me if Canada will go to war and if there will be a war. It is palpable, you can feel it. As soon as we meet people, they ask us this question. This question has become a daily concern.

I have seen that Quebeckers and Canadians do not want a war. I know that this does not mean that Quebeckers and Canadians have any sympathy for Saddam Hussein. They have no sympathy for him, no more than they did in the 1970s and 1980s when he was an ally of the United States.

Quebeckers and Canadians love freedom. This debate is important, as I said, but it is not enough. It would only be meaningful if there were a vote, if this House were to vote to express the will of Quebeckers and Canadians.

This debate is not just about whether or not there should be military intervention. This debate is about the much broader issue of how to intervene in a crisis. That is the essential issue. The issue of whether or not there should be military intervention is one that flows from it.

The 20th century was a century of international and regional conflicts. After World War I, we had the League of Nations, which failed shortly before World War II. The UN came into existence after the second world war. Since then, several international tribunals have been created, including, most recently, the International Criminal Court, in which, unfortunately, the United States has refused to participate. I mention this because it is important.

Ware and peace, men and women said after the horrors of World War II, must, from then on, be the responsibility of the United Nations and not of one country seeking to dominate another country or the world.

Therefore, two things must be avoided: militarism at all costs, such as I heard yesterday during George Bush's address, and also pacifism at all costs.

We should have intervened in Rwanda. We did not. It was a mistake not to have intervened in Rwanda. That is why I am saying that it is not a question of war or peace, but about when to intervene in a situation.

Sometimes, war is necessary when human lives are at stake. That was the case in Rwanda. We did not act and that was a mistake. Is this the case now? It is not the case at this time.

To state as George Bush did that we will go, no matter what the evidence indicates, is a mistake. To state as other countries did that we will not go, no matter what the evidence indicates, is also a mistake. Both are equally wrong. That is not what we should do.

What should we do now? First, we must act and act only under the authority of the United Nations. Resolution 1441, naturally, talks about the serious consequences for Iraq if Saddam Hussein does not act. But there is a final paragraph, paragraph 14, which says,

The Security Council decides to remain seized of the matter.

What does this mean? What should the Prime Minister understand from reading the final paragraph of Resolution 1441? He should understand that, by a second resolution or within the same resolution, the United Nations, through its Security Council, must assess the evidence and make a decision.

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• (1945)

Without that decision, Canada ought not to intervene without the go ahead of the Security Council. That ought to be clear to the Prime Minister as well as to all parliamentarians here in this House.

Resolution 1441 requires us to maintain all demands on Iraq. This is self-evident and I believe there is unanimity on it here. It also encourages us to reject any intervention without Security Council approval, and not to do as George Bush said yesterday, "If the Security Council does not agree, we will go anyway". That we cannot do.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs are saying this evening that this is hypothetical, but this is not the case. If George Bush takes the trouble to tell us this, it is because he is aware that a veto power might be exercised, that the Security Council might not give its consent, that the U.S. President is trying to get allies on his side without that consent.

In this connection, it is cowardice on Canada's part not to shoulder its responsibilities by saying, "if the Security Council is not going, than neither are we". That is what Canadians and Quebecers want to hear. And what they are not hearing.

A second condition comes to mind: we need to hold a vote here in the House. I heard the Prime Minister telling us that the environment is sufficiently important to warrant a vote here in the House and that it is a vote of confidence, that political party financing is sufficiently important for a vote of confidence. I would point out to him that war is just as important and also constitutes a vote of confidence.

I would tell the member for LaSalle—Émard, with all his talk about the democratic deficit, that not voting on a matter as serious as war constitutes a serious democratic deficit. I would tell the Prime Minister, who is holding out the threat of an election to those of his MPs who are not in agreement with him, to call an election on the war issue, and we will just see. We will let the people speak with their vote.

We need to vote here in the House. If the Security Council says, "Yes, we must go into Iraq", we will not go until we ourselves have assessed the Security Council's evidence. That is what sovereignty is all about. This Quebec sovereignist is telling you this, federal government representatives: stand tall, be as determined to ensure the sovereignty of Canada as we are to ensure the sovereignty of Quebec, and I will be right with you on this one.

A third condition is that under no circumstances must Canada act hypocritically and do indirectly what it would refrain from doing directly. We should not relieve the U.S. in Afghanistan so they can send more troops to Iraq. Holding the robber's pocket open to allow him to drop money into it is still robbing. We cannot collaborate in this way, which some might like, but which might not sit well with others.

I address my comments to the Prime Minister. I, as a sovereignist, recognize that Mr. Pearson, Mr. Trudeau, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, whom I cannot name here, and Mr. Mulroney were up to the task. They knew how to make decisions, regardless of how hard other countries pushed. The

current Prime Minister is not up to this task. He is ducking his responsibilities.

Obviously, we must maintain ties with the United States. They are our friends. However, that does not make us their servant or their mouthpiece. There are times when it is right to tell one's friends, "you are wrong".

A large part of the American population does not agree with its government. And regardless of whether or not they agree, what is our role? It is to decide for ourselves and by ourselves. It is called democracy and it is sadly lacking in this debate.

To close, I would like to remind this government that it must not confuse United Nations and United States. They are two different things. This country, Canada, and the aspiring country, Quebec, must behave in way that respects everyone. We must take a stand, and work for peace, rather than kowtowing and making decisions without any proof.

• (1950)

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the hon. member a question. Did he hear what I said? Did he listen to my speech when I said that we will decide in the interest of Canada, as a completely sovereign nation? We will decide whether war is necessary or not. It is our decision. It is the government of this country that will decide.

That is what he is calling on us to do. That is the responsibility he is asking us to take. We will take this responsibility. We will act with this in mind. We must look at what is happening and act in such a way as to ensure disarmament in Iraq, world peace and the success of the UN, which is the cornerstone of the world's security system. The policy of our government is the sovereignty of Canada and we will respect it.

I totally reject the suggestion by the leader of the Bloc Québécois who says that the government is not acting in a sovereign manner and in the interests of Canadians.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Chairman, I heard what the minister said, but I also heard what he did not say.

He did not say that Canada would never go without the approval of the Security Council. He did not say what he would tell Secretary of State Powell tomorrow about President Bush's assertion that, if the Security Council did not give the okay, Americans would go anyway and that they would go with a coalition of friends.

He should have said "We will not be among those friends. We will stand by the Security Council. We will be with the United Nations and we hope the United States will be there too, but we will not be with the United States if the United Nations is not. That is what he should have said, but that is not what I heard.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, the leader of the Bloc Québécois raised the issue of sovereignty several times. Canada's sovereignty is very important to me. Nothing is more important.

Could he tell us, which, in his opinion, is more important: the sovereignty of the UN or that of Canada?

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Chairman, let us begin with Quebec.

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What I said is that regardless of the decision made by the Security Council, we will have to make a decision here. But this decision, in my opinion, must have the support of the UN. It would create all kinds of trouble in a part of the world that is already troubled enough, the Middle East. This is what we need to realize. Until now, no proof has been given, absolutely no proof.

Of course, there was last night's moralizing address that mentioned torture and so on. That is true, it is horrible and unacceptable, but that existed when Hussein was an ally of the U.S. That existed under Pinochet, who was also an American ally. So let us not talk about morality. I think the UN needs to play a central role. As a sovereign country, we need to intervene in a sovereign manner and say that for us, we will act with the United Nations, which is able to judge if the evidence is conclusive or not. We are judging this evidence as well. We must therefore maintain our sovereignty in the United Nations.

An hon. member: We need a vote.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: With a vote, of course.

• (1955)

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Chairman, the leader of the Bloc spoke eloquently and with a lot of passion. I very much appreciated his comments. I have a comment to which I would like a reply.

He spoke about our role as a nation, as a confederation. Part of what is wrong with our role is our lack of respect in the international forum. Canada no longer has the same prime ministers and the same ministers of the past. We have become trivialized and marginalized. We are begging for bombs and communications equipment for our planes in Kosovo. We have a government that would dare to think about going to war without even going to Parliament. I would like a reply.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Chairman, I trust that Canada—and one day Quebec as well—will play a more significant role on the international scene. Canada has, moreover, done so before. Mr. Pearson played a decisive role in the history of the development of the United Nations. I have already spoken of the important roles played by Messrs. Trudeau, Clark and Mulroney. I remember the boycott of South Africa. Despite the U.S. disapproval, Mulroney stood firm, and more power to him for it.

That said, how should we fulfil this role? In my opinion, we have absolutely nothing to gain by playing policemen. We do not have the means, anyway. The role of Canada ought, moreover, to be more focussed on peacekeeping missions, in order to retain the respected image it has always had, and should keep, so that in any region of the world where there are external or internal conflicts between peoples, we may be able to step in and try to reconcile them. That is the type of reflection we should be having.

Rather than buying nuclear submarines, it might perhaps be better to give some thought to developing means of intervening strategically and tactically to strengthen world peace.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, the member made reference to the international criminal court. Saddam Hussein has killed over 220,000 Kurds. He ordered the killing of 60,000 Shiites. He is responsible for the deaths of his own constituents, including women, children, the elderly, and he has routinely ordered children in his country tortured.

My question is, does the member believe that Saddam Hussein should be charged under war crimes and if so, how should he be apprehended?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Chairman, in my opinion, Saddam Hussein could have charges brought against him in an international court, but certainly not by the Americans who are not members. We have seen Milosevic finally get his comeuppance, after numerous interventions, and Pinochet very nearly did, but for the protection of Mrs. Thatcher, shamefully. There are war criminals and I hope that Saddam Hussein will be one of those who will have to come before an international criminal court.

As well, there would be the CIA agents who engineered the overthrow of Salvador Allende and supported Pinochet. There would be the Marcos of the world, with their U.S. backing. If Saddam Hussein is a war criminal today, as an enemy of the United States, he was just as much one when he was their ally.

• (2000)

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Chairman, I will be brief. First, I want to congratulate the hon. member on his speech. We must never forget that during the gas attacks on the Kurds of Halabja in 1988, the United States remained silent and Canada remained silent.

My question for the hon. member and leader of the Bloc Québécois will be brief. If there was ever a possibility of military strikes, would the hon. leader agree that these military strikes and attacks should not only be approved by a United Nations resolution but should also respect the fundamental principles of international law?

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Chairman, I believe so. If, unfortunately, we had to resort to military action—which was the question—it should be limited to military targets. It is totally criminal to target, as is done in certain areas of the world, infrastructure, schools and parliaments. We see this. This is unacceptable, totally unacceptable. This should be under the authority of the United Nations and not under the authority of one country that decides for the United Nations.

An hon. member: It should be under international law.

Mr. Duceppe: International law and the United Nations go hand in hand.

Government Orders

However, there is the issue of pre-emptive strikes. I know that this is the issue raised by international law. International law is evolving and so it should. If there had been pre-emptive strikes on Hitler, from 1933 to 1936, before Munich in 1937, before the Sudetenland crisis, before the Anschluss, before the invasion of Poland in 1939, this would have been good for all humankind, even if international law did not allow it. That said, we still need evidence. We had sufficient evidence against Adolf Hitler. The pacifists were wrong not to act. Many were not able to look back after 1945 because they were gone. We still need evidence and, I repeat, right now, there is no such evidence.

[*English*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Chairman, let me suggest that this evening's debate on the Iraqi crisis must address four critical questions.

First, will the U.S. and the international community give the weapon's inspectors the time they need to do their job of identifying the existence of any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and ridding Iraq and the world of any such weapons?

It is not just a question of time. Nor is it just a question of whether Iraq will fully cooperate. It is also a question of whether the United States will fully cooperate with the UN weapons inspectors.

[*Translation*]

On Monday, Hans Blix clearly indicated that he had not received enough cooperation from Iraq. We already knew that. On Tuesday, after George Bush's speech, he was also clear. He confirmed that the United States had not cooperated fully either.

• (2005)

[*English*]

Let us go back for a moment to November 18 when the weapons inspectors began their chores. They made it absolutely clear that they desperately needed the full cooperation of every member of the international community. They pleaded with nations that had any evidence whatsoever bearing on the issue of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq to bring forward their evidence.

What have we heard instead from the United States? Fearmongering, warmongering, and constant undermining of confidence in the job that the weapons inspectors were doing, and dangling all the time, every single day, the notion that there indeed are material breaches, but they are not bringing forward the evidence.

The second question that we must address in this debate is, will Canada finally abandon its increasingly embarrassing and confusing position on where precisely it stands on participation in any Iraqi war?

Most days what we hear from the defence minister is, "Yes, Mr. Bush, Canada will obey". On alternate days, what do we hear from the foreign affairs minister, "Well, not today, Mr. Bush; not today anyway".

And the Prime Minister's position? Who can imagine, who can figure out, who can ferret out what the position of the Prime Minister is on this question. It seems to depend on what hour of which day. It is as if the Prime Minister is plucking petals from a daisy, "Yes, Mr.

Bush; no, Mr. Bush; Oui, M. Bush; non, M. Bush". What a frightening basis for an independent, coherent foreign policy.

[*Translation*]

This is an absolutely unacceptable foreign policy for a nation of builders that is proud of its history in peacekeeping and diplomacy.

[*English*]

The third question is, if weapons inspectors report to the UN Security Council on February 15 that Iraq is continuing to block their work and it is absolutely clear that they have been blocking, that they have been frustrating the work, and further direction from the United Nations is required, will Canada search, indeed escalate its search, for creative diplomatic alternatives to war? Because there are indeed alternatives to war.

Finally, resolution 1441 does not give a mandate to the U.S., or any coalition of so-called "the willing", to launch a military attack on Iraq.

If the second UN resolution sanctions military intervention in Iraq, will the government commit unequivocally tonight to allow a full further debate and a vote in the House of Commons before any decision is reached to send Canadian men and women into combat?

Canada faces a critical choice. It can be a resolute partner in a growing coalition, committed to building conditions for peace, building momentum for peace, or we can squander our proud tradition as a peace seeker and a peacekeeper and cave to the U.S. pressures to fall into line.

Canadians and the international community are clear. They are on the side of the UN inspectors being permitted to do their job.

[*Translation*]

The weapons inspectors must have support in order to accomplish their work.

[*English*]

If UNMOVIC is unsuccessful in dismantling any weapons of mass destruction that are detected, Canada should be in the forefront of crafting and implementing UN driven rules and protocols to ensure that Iraq does get rid of them and is prohibited from producing more.

On the eve of our Christmas recess a panel of Middle East experts, the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee and the Centre for Security and Defence Studies at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton, recommended clear, practical alternatives to war in Iraq. They strongly urged that Canada fully support:

—a rigorous and effective disarmament regime based on unfettered inspections, targeted "smart sanctions" and future monitoring and verification... work in partnership with the many other UN Member States both inside and outside the Security Council who [share that objective].

No country on earth is better positioned and bears heavier responsibility than Canada to say to our closest neighbours in no uncertain terms, “Stop the war drums and start the dialogue”. Canada must regain its voice for peace. Canadians want their government to be a force for peace. On January 18 Canadians took to the streets in frigid temperatures all over the country to say “no” to war in Iraq. I am proud that the NDP last weekend at our convention endorsed that call for peace.

Let us in this chamber tonight, through our government, echo those sentiments and in the days and weeks ahead do so, not just in words but in deeds, in partnership with the international community that overwhelmingly share Canadians' passion for a peaceful, lasting resolution to the Iraqi crisis.

• (2010)

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the hon. member for her presentation. My question to the hon. member and also the members of her party has to do with our military.

The NDP has an excellent representative on our defence committee. He speaks out extremely well. If there were a war in Iraq, what kind of a role does the hon. member see our military could play when we are about 35,000 less men and women in uniform than what we need, when all the Sea Kings we have should be grounded and when we have used submarines which we cannot use?

One of my colleagues from Nova Scotia spoke to the engineer from London, England. The engineer also spoke to me about the fact the government had to bring him here to try to fix the used submarines because we did not know how to fix them. He did not think we could ever use them. What will we do with our men and women in uniform? How will we give them the pride and dignity they want, with the situation in our military today—

The Deputy Chairman: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but she is using up a lot of time for a reply.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Chairman, in reply to the question, I have already indicated that my party has spoken loud and clear in saying that we do not think Canada's military men and women should be sent into military combat in Iraq.

There are several reasons for that, but let me state two. One is that our military men and women are already overstretched. We know that they are overcommitted and I think the member is one of those who has said so.

More important, Canada should be in the forefront of those who are saying there are alternatives to war and that we will be part of that coalition of nations who will work toward those alternatives because the fact of the matter is it is not self-evident. It is not guaranteed that some kind of attack in Iraq would provide any kind of a solution to any amassing of weapons of mass destruction that could be taking place in Iraq.

Let us turn our minds to what kinds of solutions there are to once and for all rid not just Iraq but every nation in the world of the weapons of mass destruction that threaten to destroy the planet.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I just listened to the response from the hon. member. I have a question about what she just said.

I think that we, in the Bloc Québécois, have tried to avoid extremes. We have never said that we should absolutely and immediately go with the Americans and we have never said we would never go.

In human history, mistakes have been made. I am thinking, among other things, about the negotiation that Chamberlain attempted with Hitler. The latter was never satisfied.

There comes a time when the international community—and that may be the case with the UN—will say “We have evidence. He does not want to disarm. Resolution 1441 has been passed. Now we are going to pass a resolution to disarm Saddam Hussein”.

I wonder if the hon. member would go so far as to say that even if the Security Council passed a resolution to take action that Canada should not join the international community in an operation to disarm Saddam Hussein after a second UN resolution.

[*English*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Chairman, let me repeat again what I have said, what my colleagues have said and what our new leader who has spoken proudly and loudly on this issue has said.

First, we are in complete agreement that Saddam Hussein and Iraq must be fully disarmed. If there are weapons of mass destruction, we must rid Iraq and the world of those weapons of mass destruction. However we have dealt with these issues within the context of international law. One thing that is truly worrisome about the sabre-rattling and the warmongering of U.S. is that it has taken it upon itself to talk about pre-emptive strikes absolutely in defiance of international law. It has talked about taking it upon itself to bring about a regime change.

Let me be very clear that Saddam Hussein is a demonic dictator. Saddam Hussein is somebody who none of us would be prepared to put into public office or do anything to keep him there. However once the United States or any other nation, or any coalition of nations, decides to take it upon itself to engage in pre-emptive strikes and take it upon itself to bring about through military means regime changes, then God help the future of the world as it relates to trying to establish some kind of lasting peace and stability for future generations.

• (2015)

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I was following my colleague's comments very carefully. I really admire her stand on the United Nations.

I would like to ask her a question about resolution 1441 which was passed unanimously. We say that we have to follow the resolution 1441 process to the very end. If there is a need for a second resolution in the future, this month or next month, and the resolution is again unanimously passed, 15 to 0, would the member stand up and oppose the UN resolution?

Government Orders

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Chairman, that is a very fair question and let me address it. We have made it very clear that a second resolution would be needed before there would be any contemplation of any kind of military attack in Iraq. However, should there be such a resolution, this will not be a resolution that requires all the nations of the world to participate in a war in Iraq. Presumably it would be the mandating for the possible military intervention.

Then it is up to the individual sovereign nations that consider the mandate, which would have been given under the scenario presented by the member, to decide. Will we be among the nations to participate in such a military aggression or will we say that our role is to continue relentlessly in the pursuit of peaceful alternatives? Our role, and we have made this choice before, is to be involved and engaged in the humanitarian work.

I think Canadians have said loud and clear, as they marched through the streets of the country: drop the sanctions, do not drop the bombs. That is more likely to begin to produce real progress in the direction of not only relieving the suffering of the Iraqi people, but also real progress in terms of ridding the Iraqi nation of weapons of mass destruction, should they still exist.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I listened to the member's speech, which tried to indicate that others who spoke were only fearmongers and warmongers. I do not know why this member or anyone else would think that George Bush's speech was fearmongering when he is stating facts.

We do not need anybody's speech to be fearful of a person like Saddam Hussein who has proven to the world what he is capable of and what he will do. He has demonstrated it by killing thousands and thousands of his own people.

An hon. member: Bush is more of a threat to security. That is what Canadians said.

Mr. Myron Thompson: I do not know who these people would rather have for a neighbour, but I will stick with the United States.

We do not have to have fearmongering speeches to know what Saddam Hussein is capable of doing. I want to ensure that my kids and grandkids will grow up in a world where those kinds of things do not exist and we have people who have the courage to stand up and say that they will take whatever it takes to ensure the safety of our kids through the years.

I am sorry, but I am afraid that sometimes talk will not get the answer. That was proven in World War I, World War II and a number of other times. I do not understand why the member thinks George Bush is fearmongering. Saddam Hussein has been fearmongering ever since I heard about him.

• (2020)

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Chairman, two expressions come to mind. One is that jaw-jaw is always better than war-war. Second, let me quote directly what the immediate past foreign affairs minister of this government said about the increasing threats of pre-emptive strikes and the talk about regime change. He said:

It has given renewed vigour to the apostles of realpolitik—bringing out of the shadows all those who find notions of humanitarian co-operation, international justice and the rule of law to be anathema. It has given birth to a doctrine of pre-

emption, which arrogates to the United States the right to be judge, jury and prosecutor against any country, or anyone it considers a threat, running contrary to half a century of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

This member can call it fearmongering on the part of New Democrats but we would be well to begin to adhere to the doctrine of human security approaches to the threats to world peace that are imposed for sure in the instance of Iraq, but are also presented by the kind of tactics that are being pursued increasingly by our closest American neighbours.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Chairman, let me start on a procedural note. I regret very much that the government chooses take note debates over real debates followed by a vote. I think that is bad for Parliament. It confirms the reputation of this place as a place that only talks, does not act and does not have authority. It is also bad for policy because the government has neither the authority that a real vote would give nor does it have access to the consensus and the understanding that can come when governments are open with people.

I do not want to belabour it but there is a better way to do this. In the question of the preparation for the gulf war there were regular votes. There was a continual hearing before the relevant standing committee of Parliament. There was an opportunity for Parliament to be heard and for Parliament's vote to count. I would recommend that to the government of the future.

There was one difference of course with the gulf war and that was, whether people agreed with our government or not, that the Government of Canada had a policy which we explained, defended and advanced in the world. The government today cannot explain what it is doing because it does not know what it is doing.

I want to start with what is clear about Iraq. The regime in Iraq is vicious, brutal and dangerous. It is dangerous to the region and it is dangerous to the world. It has developed weapons of mass destruction and it has shown a willingness to use those weapons. Everyone, not least the citizens of Iraq, would be better off with a new regime. It is also clear that since the pressure went on, Iraq has begun to heed the United Nations and world opinion. This pressure would have been nowhere near as strong, it has to be said, without the leadership of the United States of America. That the UN inspectors are there at all is a tribute to American determination.

The issue we have to look at here is what does Canada do? First, we have to make our own decisions in our own traditions. I know the minister had to leave tonight to get to Washington. I was pleased that before he left he cited the phrase from the president's speech that struck my attention, namely that the course of this nation does not depend on the decisions of others. That certainly is language that Canadians should regularly quote back to the government of the United States.

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One of the difficulties that we face, although I will not have time to elaborate, is that the government has so ignored relations between Canada and the United States that it has none of the leverage that is needed to say no to the United States on tough issues. I know something about that. As foreign minister in a previous government we had to deal with a demand by the United States to have Canada endorse an issue that was very dear to the heart of the then president, the so-called strategic defence initiative, star wars. We were able to say no to the Americans and to maintain good relations because we had built up strong leverage with the Americans.

This government's abandonment of the relationship with the United States of America has meant that we are being forced willy-nilly into a Hobson's choice between the United Nations and the United States, and that is simply another failure of the policy of the government.

Second, we should be using all the independent influence that we have to bring pressure for change in the Iraq regime, including our influence in the region; including such influences as we have left as our ODA levels fall and fall; including such influences as we have left in the developing world; and including looking for potential asylum for Saddam Hussein, if that is the only peaceful way by which the regime can be brought about. Our influence has withered as our defence spending has fallen, as our official development assistance has fallen, but we nonetheless still have significant influence in the world.

Third, and this is a key matter in the debate tonight raised with eloquence by the leader of the Bloc Québécois and others, we have to respect the United Nations and we have to respect international law.

It may be that a special burden of leadership rests with the world's only super power and that it must contemplate acts which other nations would not contemplate. However a special burden also rests with this country whose distinction is not our naked power but our leadership in building and respecting international institutions. More than the regime in Iraq is at issue, so also is the regime of international law and the respect for international institutions.

• (2025)

[*Translation*]

Canada has always played its role as a member of multinational coalitions. We did so proudly and effectively during the gulf war. We did so under the auspices of NATO in Kosovo. However, we have always acted in the context of the United Nations and the international community.

[*English*]

Before the minister left he spoke two or three times about working with the United Nations now. He treats as hypothetical and leaves open the possibility that Canada would take actions that are not approved by the Security Council of the United Nations. He should stop doing that. He should be clear that Canada will operate only within the authority of the United Nations and he should not hold open the possibility of some kind of independent act.

Of all countries, Canada should not be ambiguous about our respect for the United Nations and for international law. We should

be clear now that we will act only within the context of initiatives sanctioned by the Security Council.

Finally, I want to talk about what I think is a real need of context here. We in Canada should be the strong, calm voice urging cool-headed examination of the consequences of all the actions that are proposed and, indeed, the consequences of inaction. For example, if an attack were to occur, particularly were it to occur outside the auspices of the United Nations, what would be the impact on the stability of the rest of the Middle East and particularly on the stability of moderate regimes in Egypt or Jordan or the regime in Saudi Arabia? How would the tinderbox in Israel—Palestine be affected? How much more aggressive and dangerous would anti-Americanism become in the wider Muslim world, from Africa to Asia to the former Soviet Union? What would be the fate of the real and broad coalition which was built to fight terrorism, a coalition that could come apart over the issue of an intervention that was not broadly supported?

What reason on earth have we to believe that outside powers could create a successful new regime in Iraq or even hold together the Iraqi state? How likely is it that the war would be short? How likely is it that the very weapons we fear might be unleashed in desperation?

It is easy to be mesmerized by the debate in the United States, which is a debate naturally fueled by its status as a super power and by its difficulty sometimes seeing the world as others of us see it. However we have a responsibility as a country with our own independent reputation, very often a reputation of working very closely with the United States, to be prepared to tell hard truths to the United States, including on occasions saying "Don't go there, don't do it that way, do it this way". We also have a reputation as a supporter of the United Nations on multinational approaches. We have to turn the world's attention in these critical next several weeks to some of the consequences of some of the actions that might be being contemplated. We cannot let Canada simply drift into support by ambiguity or by some other kind of drift.

The next two steps in the process are clear. Secretary Powell will come next week to the Security Council with evidence, and he should understand that the world expects to see evidence. There were several references last night, all of them vague, about intelligence reports. We need to know more, not necessarily the House but authorities need to know more about the content of those intelligence reports. It is not enough to say that they are there. There has to be scrutiny of them. We need the proof. Then of course Hans Blix will return in mid-February with a further report on Iraqi compliance with inspections.

These are very complex questions. I want to return to where I began. The capacity of the Government of Canada to deal with these complex questions, to mobilize Canadian public opinion and to have support if we need to take hard decisions, would grow immensely if the Government of Canada would take the Parliament of Canada and the people of Canada more into its confidence and would allow, as have previous governments in previous conflicts such as the gulf war, members not just to speak into the wind but to vote on the question as to whether or not Canada should become engaged in these actions internationally.

Government Orders

• (2030)

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I thank the right hon. member for his firm information which was very helpful. At the end of his speech he said that he would like the Government of Canada to take parliamentarians into its confidence.

Does the member believe that President Bush has taken the government into its confidence enough in the information provided either to the government or officials?

In listening to the leaders of the Bloc, the NDP and the right hon. gentleman's party, it seems they were saying virtually the same thing but I want to make sure I did not miss anything. Are those three positions roughly the same?

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Chairman, I think it is fair to say that the NDP's position is different from that of the Bloc and the Progressive Conservative Party. I think the Alliance position, as I understand it, is also different in terms of a much greater willingness on the part of the Alliance to be prepared to work with the United States, the United Kingdom if it was there, Australia if it was there and a group of others who President Bush called the willing.

I believe and my party believes that there is an obligation on the part of Canada to work within the auspices of the United Nations. We wish that the government would say that and not only work within the United Nations now but continue to work within the United Nations and eschew the possibility of any action outside the United Nations auspices.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I think we all appreciate the right hon. member's reflections on questions of foreign policy, although I must say that I do not share the conclusion that he has arrived at on this particular matter.

He says that he and his party will not support Canadian action outside of a second United Nations Security Council resolution.

Did the right hon. member and his party support the allied action of Canada and its NATO partners in Kosovo which happened with the explicit disapproval of the United Nations Security Council after the exercise of the Russian veto?

Would he further care to reflect on the many tragic and historic failures of multilateral institutions to act to enforce security and save lives, such as the United Nations failure to act to intervene and save lives in Rwanda; such as the League of Nations failure to properly confront the rise of German militarism which made that institution obsolete?

Will he not admit that while multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations, are preferable institutions for international action, that sometimes they fail in their mandate to uphold the peace and that in such instances free and responsible democracies, acting collectively, bear the responsibility which organizations like the United Nations sometimes fail properly to understand?

• (2035)

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Chairman, of course the United Nations and other multinational agencies sometimes fail. That is often because only the toughest questions come to them and it is

natural that there will be a rate of failure when they deal only with the toughest questions.

Our responsibility surely is to ensure that wherever possible the United Nations system works, the multilateral system works. We should consequently resist the temptation to be drawn by small groups that might depart from the strength of the multilateral tradition and significantly undermine United Nations activities and indeed increase the rate of its failures.

There is a possibility for the United Nations to work. As I said in my remarks, there is no doubt in my mind that had the United Nations been left without the pressure of the U.S. administration it would not have been as vigorous as it has been. There is no doubt in my mind that the inspectors are there largely because of pressure from the United States.

However I think one of the most important developments in this conflict has been that other nations have encouraged the United States to move within the United Nations. I pray that it will continue to operate within that context. If it does not, I hope Canada will find the courage to say that we will support a multilateral institution and not contribute to its undermining.

With regard to Kosovo, we did support the involvement in Kosovo because at least in the beginning it was an intervention that had been discussed between the United States and NATO.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Chairman, I listened carefully and I heard the Conservative leader make the case for Canada acting always within the auspices of the United Nations. Let me say that the New Democratic Party very much agrees with that proposition.

He then went on to suggest that the NDP somehow advocates doing otherwise. I want to ask, in raising a question with the Conservative leader, whether he therefore takes the position that if a second UN resolution mandates the use of force to deal with a continuing crisis of non-compliance, of Iraq not ridding itself of weapons of mass destruction, whether it is his view that the UN would actually dictate to member nations of the United Nations that they are compelled to go to war. If not, does he not recognize that there is a sovereign choice to be made by a sovereign nation as to what role within the auspices and the context of the United Nations any individual country would choose to play?

Finally, in relation to the position advanced again and again by his own party, particularly the defence critic, that Canada's armed forces are badly overstretched, would he not agree that it would be more consistent with our proud tradition and the requirements of the situation for us to play a role in terms of humanitarian aid, in terms of continuing to try to build the conditions for lasting peace, rather than to enter into combat situations where we have a very limited role and a contribution to make in any case?

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Chairman, accepting the hon. member's hypothetical, of course the United Nations does not, by adopting a resolution of that kind, dictate to members. Members have to make their choices, but I think it is very important that a country like Canada signal clearly that its choice would be, in those circumstances, to support the United Nations, including militarily.

Government Orders

Yes, we are significantly enfeebled by the fact that the government has allowed military spending to plummet, as it has allowed international development spending to plummet. We are considerably enfeebled. Nonetheless, our presence in the United Nations action would be significant. When I was last in Cyprus, the Canadian peacekeeping complement was down to two people, but nonetheless the Canadian flag was there. It was important that the Canadian flag was there so that we were there with more than simply words; we were also there indicating as much of a commitment as we could make.

But it would be our choice, a choice I hope we would signal we would make, to support a United Nations action.

• (2040)

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, the right hon. gentleman made one point which I may not have heard correctly, but he certainly can indicate if I have misunderstood, and that is that we should vigorously search for asylum for Saddam Hussein, obviously somewhere outside of Iraq.

He nods, so I believe that this was part of his statement. In which case, virtually every country that I have been thinking of in the last few minutes would undoubtedly say, "If you wish asylum for Saddam Hussein, why don't you take him yourself?" Is he willing to have Saddam Hussein here in Canada, perhaps in his own riding of Calgary? If so, would he be willing to provide the immunity from prosecution for the crimes against humanity of Saddam Hussein if he did in fact come here, as undoubtedly we will be pushed very strongly if we adopted the right hon. gentleman's proposal?

Could he answer those two questions?

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Chairman, the minister should not trivialize everything. I believe that it is an important part of the issue now, as it was in the gulf war, to see if there are opportunities for asylum. We raised the question and as foreign minister I raised the question with other countries then.

Would Canada accept Saddam Hussein and offer asylum? No, we would not.

The minister, a former member of the Department of Foreign Affairs, pretends to shrug, pretending not to know why I would answer that way. He knows perfectly well the difficulty of arranging asylum and he knows that it can be done. If news reports are to be believed, there were in fact active discussions regarding asylum in northern Africa in the days prior to the conclusion of the gulf war. It is an option that is worth considering. Canada, with our influence, or at least the influence we used to have in the developing world, is a country that could play an active role in trying to see if that option is open.

The Chairman: I propose to take three questions: one from the official opposition, one from the government and one from the New Democratic Party. I hope that each question and response will be less than a minute so that we can move on to the next round.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the hon. member for his remarks and especially for his observation that it is easier to buttonhole the Americans and give them our advice if we have been standing shoulder to shoulder with them, at least on occasion, and have not

used the bully pulpit that the Liberal Party sometimes thinks it has to chastise the Americans day in and day out.

I would like to ask the right hon. member about his conclusion that, of all nations, Canada must show respect for the United Nations and its resolutions, yet paragraph 4 of resolution 1441 lays down two tests: that if there are false statements or omissions in Iraq's declaration and failure by Iraq at any time to comply with or cooperate fully in the implementation of this resolution, it will further constitute a material breach.

It seems to me that we want to have respect, and I think we all do, for the United Nations and its resolutions, but there is that 12 year pattern of breaking resolutions that have been put before it, and a further pattern, as the Blix report already says, of further breaking those resolutions. I think it is time to show some respect for the United Nations by saying that it has to adhere to this or else the consequences are coming.

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Chairman, that decision in fact is to be taken by the 15 member nations of the Security Council. In a sense, the discussion about whether we need one or two resolutions is to some degree artificial if what we are seeking is a unanimous decision of the Security Council. If significant members, particularly members with vetoes in the Security Council, will not accept the mandate of the first resolution, then a second will be necessary. That is simply a practical reality to the United Nations having to act.

The Minister of the Environment has gone. He asked me about immunity. Obviously if there were to be something done with respect to asylum, that very difficult question of immunity would have to be looked at. No one would want to, but it would be preferable to holocaust.

• (2045)

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the points the hon. member made when he explained that if the war goes on for too long in Iraq, there will be consequences in the Middle East neighbourhood for our friends in the Middle East, Iraq will be partitioned and the Moslem world will rise up against the Americans. These are very good points.

My question is about the 1991 war, in which U.S. President George Bush Senior had 36 allies. Now George W. Bush is having difficulty getting allies anywhere in the world. There are three countries where only the leaders, but not the populations, are supporting this attack that is planned against Iraq. Sixty per cent of the U.S. population is against the war. Could the hon. member explain why there is such a difference between 1991 and now, when the U.S. has no allies and basically is all by itself in the world?

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Chairman, one did not need to send inspectors to Kuwait to know the Iraqis were there. The question was very clear. It was easy to mobilize support.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Chairman, last June I was in Yugoslavia, where there was a war because of Milosevic. Walking through the streets, one could see buildings that had been destroyed and the bodies of people who had been killed.

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I wish to ask the Leader of the Progressive Conservatives whether it is worthwhile to go to Iraq. Children and innocent civilians will be killed, and that will be the price we have to pay to get Saddam Hussein.

If we were to say yes to the war, for example, does this mean giving them permission to march into Baghdad and do as they please? If so, would your party refuse to support the United States? We can know when a war starts but we do not know when and how it will end. There is no longer any control once it has started.

I would like to know the position of the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Chairman, we cannot through our failure to act give Saddam Hussein permission to use the weapons at his disposal to commit atrocities toward children and innocent civilians throughout the world.

The former leader of the NDP has just said that Saddam Hussein is a threat that cannot be ignored. There is a reason why he is a threat. It is not just because he is not a nice man, it is because he is a truly dangerous one and probably a man in possession of weapons of mass destruction.

That is why thought must be given to a reaction. A threat like this cannot be ignored.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, on Saturday, January 18, I took part in a demonstration for peace in Montreal. It was extremely cold out. I spent some time at the rally. There were people of all ages, the young and the not so young, even children and babes in arms. Apparently there were 25,000 people who took part in the demonstration. Organizers had expected between 5,000 and 6,000 people. There was a huge crowd, despite the cold. These people came out not only to protest against war, but to demonstrate in support of peace. There is a big difference. Before taking a stand against war, one must take a stand for peace.

I listened to President Bush's speech yesterday. After talking about the American economy, he started to talk about war. He became animated and passionate. I noticed that the standing ovations that he received from everyone present in that huge hall also became animated and passionate when he spoke about war. It seemed to me as though there was almost an excitement for the United States to go to war.

[*English*]

I just sense in the body language, in the feeling and in his speech that what he wants more than anything else is a chance to go to war. I find that chilling. I find it scary, this feeling that bombs and missiles, smart or not, are going to suddenly bring peace to the world.

I was encouraged that within the United States itself, people are starting to speak out, that a large movement is happening within the United States saying, "Caution, let us beware of war". This is what Senator Kennedy, whose family cannot be accused of lack of patriotism for their country, said to the National Press Club on January 21:

Surely, we can have effective relationships with other nations without adopting a chip on the shoulder foreign policy, a my way or the highway policy that makes all our goals in the world more difficult to achieve. I continue to be convinced that this is the wrong war at the wrong time. The threat from Iraq is not imminent and it will

distract America from the two more immediate threats to our security: the clear and present danger of terrorism and the crisis with North Korea.

He called it embarking on a new unilateralism on the part of President Bush.

If there is a consensus here in the House, it is to say that Saddam Hussein is a brutal and ruthless despot and dictator who has created tremendous havoc within his own country and tremendous hardship for the people in his care. We know that. We certainly do not excuse him.

At the same time, if we are consistent, what do we say about the regime in North Korea? What do we say about the regime in Myanmar? What do we say about the regime in Libya? What do we say about the regime in Zimbabwe? When we are finished turning our sights against Saddam Hussein, do we turn our sights to all the other dictators around the world and go to war, one war after another until we have got rid of them?

I was reading the resolution of the United States congress when the United States congress in September gave the authorization to President Bush to go ahead. This resolution within the United States congress is subject to two conditions.

The first one is that the president must declare to congress that diplomatic efforts to enforce UN resolutions on weapons of mass destruction have failed. The second condition is that the president must certify that action against Iraq would not hinder efforts to pursue the al-Qaeda terrorist network. These are the two conditions.

Did members hear President Bush speak about bin Laden? At one time on all the U.S. networks from the president's mouth there was not one day, one hour that went by without our hearing about bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Suddenly they have disappeared from the scene. We never hear about them any more. Suddenly Saddam Hussein has become bin Laden. He is a terrorist menace. He is going to destroy the United States and the rest of the world.

What about bin Laden? What about North Korea, as Senator Kennedy rightly asked? Senator Kennedy went back to congress and today he has been asking for congress to review its September resolution that gives authorization to President Bush. He said he will introduce a measure requiring President Bush to get a new approval before launching a military strike on Iraq. This was not us Liberals in Canada. It was Senator Kennedy within the congress of the United States, a great patriot if ever there was.

● (2050)

Senator Kennedy said this:

Much has changed in the many months since congress last debated war with Iraq [in September]. UN inspectors are on the ground and making progress, and their work should continue. Osama bin Laden and the Korean nuclear crisis continue to pose far greater threats... [than Iraq].

What is happening to this sudden syndrome, that shifting of position that now Saddam Hussein has become the great new Hitler of the world that will destroy the world overnight?

Government Orders

Last night I was lucky to hear an interview with a French Algerian journalist by the name of Mohamed Issami. He managed to infiltrate the al-Qaeda network in Paris, which is a very prominent al-Qaeda network. He managed to get their trust and get all kinds of their secrets. He has published a book and has said he is not scared to be interviewed, that he will take all the consequences.

He said, "I am a Muslim. I follow my faith very faithfully. My faith is not the faith of Saddam Hussein or al-Qaeda. I do not believe in murder, in killing".

At the same time he gave this warning. He said that from having been inside an al-Qaeda cell that he has heard from these people themselves that what they wish more than anything else in the world is for the United States to attack Iraq, because this would give them the most wonderful excuse to recruit new young Islamic people, new young terrorists in the making who are training in Chechnya and Afghanistan and other places, to carry on a terrorist war forever, for years and years and years, because they will use any attack on the Muslim world as a religious attack of Christians against Muslims. He said that they will polarize the debate so that young Islamic people feeling despair in the Middle East and elsewhere will join them in this terrible feeling of thinking that the world is white and black, and that unless they go to war and use terror, they will never get a chance.

He warned us to be extremely careful. From an al-Qaeda cell he said that war would be a disastrous consequence for us within the western world.

What does war do? I listen to President Bush. All the B-52s in the world, all the ships and the armaments and the 60,000 troops, what are they going to do? They will bomb Iraq to smithereens. They will destroy and kill. Bombs and missiles do not distinguish between young and old, soldiers and non-soldiers. They destroy and they kill innocent people. They kill young people.

Ten million of Iraq's population are under 18. Some of these people will be destroyed as well in a war.

I do not know if the United States ever listens to our debates, but what we are saying to the people there who feel like us is to let us strive by all means to avoid war. Let us use the United Nations, not to try to convince the other nations that war should happen, but very much the contrary, to let the inspectors continue the work and to use every means at our disposal so that war, if war has to be, and I sure hope not, would be very much the ultimate result and the ultimate weapon. I pray and hope that it never happens that way.

• (2055)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, it was an interesting linkage that the member drew between bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. He recognizes that the coalition and the war on terrorism has successfully wiped out traces of bin Laden, that preparations are now being made for the next phase of the war on terrorism, and this phase is going to be brought to pass by making peace in Iraq.

The member was talking about the many deaths in Iraq that the war would bring to pass. Given the hundreds of thousands of Kurds who have been murdered, the Shi'ites who have been killed, the unnecessary deaths of the elderly, the women and the children, and

the constant torture that goes on such as the stoning of women as they have gone back to the old laws, could he compare the number of people who are going to face certain death under the rule of Saddam versus the number of people who may face death in the peacemaking process in the Middle East?

• (2100)

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Chairman, that is like saying we should compare one with the other and find out which one produces more numbers.

I could ask the same question of the member. How many people are going to die of famine in Zimbabwe? They say six million people are likely to do so. How many people are going to die under the North Korean regime? How many people are going to die if the North Korean regime, which has been conveniently left alone by the United States, starts using nuclear weapons which, according to Senator Kennedy, who should know because he has all the intelligence reports at his disposal, is far more lethal than the Saddam Hussein regime? What do we do with them?

At some point we have to agree that the United Nations is the arm that will eventually arrive at the result of deposing dictators. It may take more time. It took time with Mobutu. It took time with every dictator in the world. We cannot compare the situation in Iraq today to what happened with Hitler. That is a total misreading of history. There were 80 million people in Germany with armaments beyond compare who invaded countries much weaker than theirs.

In Iraq the opposite is happening. Iraq has been practically disarmed. It is a nation that is poor and completely unable to attack the United States tomorrow morning. It is a figment of people's imaginations. As Senator Kennedy suggested, North Korea is much more likely to start a nuclear war than is Saddam Hussein.

Why do we leave it alone? Why do we leave bin Laden alone? He is still free to roam, free to practise terror. Why do we leave alone the regime of the old Burma, Myanmar? Why are we so selective that suddenly we count people, that war is going to produce less deaths, so let us go to war? What happens if it produces many more than the number of people that would be saved? How can the member predict in advance how many thousands of people are going to die when the bombs start to fall? I would not like to be there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I listened to my colleague's speech with interest. I would describe his speech as very pacifist, which is a bit how I see his personality. He is someone who believes in peace and I think that this is good. He also spoke in favour of the UN, and on this, we agree.

He said that we must give peace every chance; there are different options available to the UN. My party and I agree that we need a second UN resolution to judge whether or not resolution 1441 has been breached and to set out a series of actions to follow up on the resolution.

If he does support peace, he must give it as many chances as possible. For us, this means a second UN resolution. His government's position does not seem to include this for now. Is his opinion compatible with the position of his government, and would he prefer a second UN resolution before any military action?

Government Orders

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Chairman, I talked very openly about this with the Prime Minister. Our position is very clear. We support Resolution 1441.

Resolution 1441 will return before the 15 members of the Security Council on February 5. Mr. Blix will produce a report. Before the United States can persuade the rest of the world to go to war against Iraq and implement the measures set out in Resolution 1441, it must persuade China, Russia, France, Germany and all the other countries that do not want war.

This is the first step. I think that when this issue is debated by the Security Council, the chances of the United States convincing the other members are very slim. So they will have to decide if they will go to war together with the British. I hope that our country will decide, at that time, not to go to war because this decision will not have the support of the United Nations.

[*English*]

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Chairman, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for a thoughtful and compassionate speech.

I would like to briefly comment on the question asked by my colleague from the Canadian Alliance. It reminded me of the time that Madeleine Albright was being interviewed by a journalist named Lesley Stahl. She was asked about the possibility that hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children might die as a result of the economic sanctions imposed on the people of Iraq. She was asked whether she was prepared to accept the death of hundreds of thousands of children. She paused and said that yes, that was a price worth paying. What an appalling response. We know that those children have died.

I want to ask the hon. member, for whom I have great respect, a question that I put to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and which he did not answer, and has not answered yet. In the event that the government of this country decides to participate in the military coalition either under the framework of the United Nations or as a member of the coalition of the willing, God help us, is it the position of this member that the House of Commons should have an opportunity not just to debate this profoundly important issue of life and death, but also have the opportunity to vote on that question?

• (2105)

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Chairman, that would be my choice.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I fear we are going to have another one of those debates tonight where the Liberals will say they passionately care, and no one doubts that the caring is there, but I am not sure that they are being realistic as to what is necessary to make the United Nations relevant in the long term.

There has been chatter about whether we need a second resolution. It is not the second one that we have to worry about, but it is the 16th one.

I used to have a neighbour who lived behind our house and she used to call her kids in and tell them she would count to 10. She would get up to nine and then she would count nine and one-half, nine and three-quarters, nine and seven-eighths. The kids completely ignored her.

In a sense, that is my concern about the United Nations. Sixteen resolutions later and it is still being ignored. If it were not for the fact that the Americans said we should get at it or else, guess what happened? When the Iraqis finally got to the point where they said it looked like the Americans meant business, they let the inspectors back in.

I want the United Nations to be respected. However, it has to mean business when a resolution is passed. Otherwise, we shrug our shoulders and hope for the best. We hoped for the best during the first and second world wars and in Kosovo when those forces, finally, decided to move without United Nations approval. Why? There comes a time when we either mean something multilaterally or else multilateralism does not mean anything.

We must protect the United Nations, I argue, by being firm with the resolution. I do not mean the second one that people muse about, but the 15 that have led us to this point. This is not a wish for war. If we do not take the United Nations seriously, or if we just keep passing these things, then the butcher's of this world will keep doing their dirty deeds.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the member who asked me the question has counted the number of resolutions that have been passed concerning Israel and Palestine and have been ignored over the years?

I wonder if we stacked up all the resolutions of the United Nations that have been ignored, how many there would be? I wonder if the United Nations would have been far more credible and far more potent if the United States had not chosen along the way to pay its dues when it suited it and let the United Nations almost die a financial death, and to using the United Nations when it does its thing and this time—

An hon. member: Do you beat up on your neighbour like that? At home?

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: If the member asks me a question, he should give me a chance to answer. I listened to his leader with great respect. I listened to him when he asked questions. He may not agree with me. And if he does agree with me I would be very sorry because of the positions he has taken in the past, such as: let's go to war, let's send the bombs, let's arm ourselves to the teeth and blast away and the world will be nirvana. It will be paradise. I do not believe in this myself. I do not believe in this kind of theory.

I am saying that the United States has been playing footsie with the United Nations. When it suits the Americans, it is fine. When it does not suit them, they do not pay their dues; they disregard them. Have they signed a convention of the United Nations? They ignored the convention on biodiversity. They turned their back on the international criminal court. They have not ratified the landmines agreement because it did not suit them. They turned away from Kyoto and an agreement concerning biological weapons. Suddenly, when they sign an agreement about anti-ballistic missiles, when it does not suit them they move away from it. They ignore the treaty that they have signed. They unilaterally debark from it at the same time.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

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• (2110)

The Chairman: Order, please. Colleagues, let me give you the perspective from this chair for a moment. It is rather refreshing to have an occasion when members speak about a very serious matter with a great deal of passion and interest. Now it may require a little extra effort to be more attentive, to be a little bit more respectful, but if we truly want to allow this chamber to engage in these meaningful debates which bring passion and animation, then it also calls for a little bit more self discipline from all of us.

I leave it in your hands so that as many members as possible can participate freely and respectfully during the remainder of the debate.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: I think I made my point, Mr. Chairman. I was asked why so many UN resolutions relating to Iraq have been ignored. I could quote time and again various conventions of the United Nations that have been ignored by certain countries including the United States. I could mention resolutions that have been ignored about the Middle East, that are left there without follow-up that could have been invoked by the various countries including the United States.

We cannot just select one group that suits us today. This has become the fashion of the day, to turn our sites on Iraq and suddenly it has become the great obsession of Mr. Bush. We are ignoring North Korea, which is a far greater threat according to the words of a senior senator of the United States.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, the events of this last week have sounded a clarion call for leadership. We learned Monday that the efforts of the United Nations to disarm Saddam Hussein have not gone well. We must do a quick review of those serious concerns that have been raised by Dr. Blix.

First, the UN disarmament resolution calls on Iraq to deliver a comprehensive list of the names of all of the officials who worked on previous weapons programs. According to the Blix report Iraq's list omits over 3,000 scientists and weapons workers who were known to have worked on past Iraqi weapons projects. How is it that 3,000 such officials have vanished from the record?

The omission suggests that Saddam believes that these 3,000 weapons makers have information that would implicate his regime and expose his weapons program. Iraq is required by the resolution to permit access to these people any time, anywhere and without the supervision of uncle Saddam.

Iraq has permitted no such thing. Every time inspectors have asked to interview one of these people in every case they have been told that the individual will not be allowed to speak unless there is the presence of an Iraqi official appointed by Saddam Hussein.

Second, the resolution demanded that Iraq must offer a current, accurate and complete declaration of its weapons programs. Again, Dr. Blix is unsatisfied. Iraq's 12,000 page weapons declaration is riddled with holes and filled with mysteries. These ambiguities, said Dr. Blix, suggest that Saddam has deadly VX nerve gas, the components to make thousands of gallons of anthrax, 6,500 chemical bombs that cannot be accounted for, and an unknown number of chemical rocket warheads. Iraq also has missiles with a greater range than 150 km than is permitted by the United Nations.

There is a possibility that the inspectors could locate some of these weapons if they were able to carry out their reconnaissance flyover missions as provided for in resolution 1441. However, Dr. Blix and his inspectors have had no such luxury. Iraq will not assure the safety of the United Nations reconnaissance aircraft.

Without access to air reconnaissance the inspectors' jobs become nearly impossible. How else can inspectors track the location of potential weapons installations and mobile chemical laboratories? What might otherwise be found out that cannot be found out unless they have this air reconnaissance? The resolution requires complete access to all suspected weapons facilities, documents and records. In this section of the resolution Iraq is compelled to actively cooperate with inspectors without threatening United Nations officials.

Did Saddam Hussein comply with that requirement? Not according to Dr. Blix. He said Iraq is failing to disclose information and that Saddam Hussein has harassed the inspectors. Dr. Blix added that 3,000 pages of documents on nuclear weapons development were discovered in the home of an Iraqi scientist where they had been hidden. This is not compliance.

What does all this mean to weapons inspectors? Picture a country the size of British Columbia with a regime that hides weapons in mobile labs or possibly in underground installations, where a canister the size of a glass of water can hold enough botulism or other toxins to devastate a large Canadian city and devastating weapons that can be hidden in a suitcase.

Without air reconnaissance and access to witnesses all of this is an impossible task for the UN inspectors. Dr. Blix's report suggests that we have every reason to believe that Saddam has weapons of mass destruction and his horrendous record of mass killings give us great reason to believe that he will use them.

Like other megalomaniacs throughout history, Saddam has shown a breathtaking propensity to miscalculate, by invading Iran and Kuwait. Dictators of his ilk are known for other twisted behaviour such as the times he gassed to death thousands of his own people. Anybody who is betting on the cautious and pragmatic behaviour of a monster like this, who systematically tortures his own people, is a dangerous gambler.

• (2115)

Another threat that emanates is not just from what Saddam may do himself but from what he can employ others to do for him. His documented relationship with terrorist organizations would allow him to delegate his terror to strategic partners. This may already be happening. These groups would not hesitate to use weapons of horror against their sworn enemies, as they have already.

Traditional deterrence is obsolete with Saddam's terrorist friends. After all, they are hard to kill and they are not afraid to die. Either way, they have little reason to fear reprisal. It is in Saddam's interest to delay and to make strategic alliances with these so-called undeterables, and it is in our interest to stop him.

Government Orders

That brings me to the next point. In light of these perils, it is difficult to understand the architects of unrealistic appeasement. They argue that the United Nations alone should decide Canada's response to this crisis.

Canada respects the United Nations, but at the same time, where did we ever get the idea that the United Nations is infallible? This is the same United Nations that recently elected Libya, with its tyrant, Muammar Ghadaffi, to be the world's guru on human rights. It is the same United Nations that is scheduled to rotate none other than Iraq into the presidency of the disarmament committee this May. Where was the United Nations when a Canadian general pleaded, literally wept, for it to intervene to stop a massacre that he said would happen in Rwanda? The United Nations did not intervene and over a million people were hopelessly massacred. Where was the United Nations when the massacre was unfolding in Kosovo? This is not an infallible institution and it would be a mistake to totally put our sovereignty into its hands.

[*Translation*]

It is also important to consider that there are two permanent members of the UN Security Council, France and Russia, with oil interests in Iraq. Their interests could affect their ability to make a decision about Iraq. However, it is important that Canada try to convince France and Russia that their oil interests should not affect their judgment regarding Iraq.

• (2120)

[*English*]

It is not only international security that is at stake. The very relevance of the United Nations and its future is at stake. As much as we want to work with the United Nations, we must defend our sovereignty, Canadian sovereignty, Canadian interests and values that are being threatened by this situation. We must defend them.

We must focus relentlessly on the objective of disarming this madman. Canada must join with its allies to send a final message to Saddam that this is his chance to disarm and he must take it. That means pre-deploying Canadian troops to the region to deter Saddam from defying his obligations to the United Nations and to send a message that he cannot continue to obstruct UN inspectors, Dr. Blix and his crew.

Kofi Annan said just a few days ago that the only thing Saddam Hussein understands is a show of force. We saw that happen in 1995 when once again Saddam Hussein amassed thousands of his troops on the Kuwait border. It was only when he saw a show of force that he backed down.

In conclusion, Saddam's regime in a sense is much like the Bourbon dynasty: He forgets nothing and he learns nothing. He has never forgotten his fantasy of dominating the Arab world and he never truly learned the lessons of his failed transgressions.

The question is, what have we learned? As I look across the floor of the House, with respect, I must say that the answer to that question is not clear. Some members of the House have appointed themselves ambassadors of unrealistic appeasement, trotting over to Iraq to look starstruck into the eyes of the highest ranking officials in that murderous regime. Such adventures merely serve as propaganda tools for the beligerence of Baghdad.

Winston Churchill summarized this type of behaviour best when he said "An appeaser is one who feeds the crocodile, hoping it will eat him last".

As for the Prime Minister, I think we can all agree, his response to this crisis has been far less than Churchillian. One thing is clear and simple: Saddam Hussein is an evil man. He must comply to the resolution of the United Nations or face serious consequences. This is not a possible war against the people of Iraq. Ours is a clear stand against a twisted dictator who threatens international security and who threatens the values that we hold dear as Canadians.

Iraq could transform from a dungeon of despotism to a lamppost of liberty, but that will never happen if Saddam Hussein does not comply.

Canada must answer the call for leadership with our allies. We must make Saddam Hussein realize that he has no other option but to comply and that we have no other option than to take actions that are firm, strong and unrelenting until he does.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the hon. member for his speech even though I totally disagree with his position on the UN and the importance of reacting rapidly and attacking Iraq immediately.

One aspect of his speech piqued my curiosity. He thinks that Russia and France might have a somewhat biased position because they already have interests in Iraqi oil. By the way, Iraq's resources are probably as extensive as Saudi Arabia's.

Does he not think that the United States might have an eye on the Iraqi oil fields? Would it not be to the United States' advantage to strike quickly, even they have to go alone? They could say "We have done the work, so the oil fields in Iraq now belong to us". Might it be possible that the United States has a vested interest, specifically for oil, in launching a planned offensive against Iraq?

Mr. Stockwell Day: Not at all Mr. Chairman. Now, when the world is not safe, oil prices are high. It is not the time for American and Canadian companies to make profits. Western nations cannot set out to take oil from Iraq. In Iraq, oil does not belong to American or Canadian companies, it belongs to Iraqis.

Now we learn that two countries, France and Russia, have interests there. Profits for western companies are very low because there is no security

.The United States and Canada and our allies all want security.

Government Orders

• (2125)

[English]

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Chairman, Mr. Blix was referred to quite often in the hon. member's speech. Mr. Blix has asked for time to finish his mandate as provided to him by a unanimous motion in the United Nations. He wants time to finish his report and I do not know what that report will say in the end. Does the hon. member think that Mr. Blix should have the time it takes to finish his report to the standard that was outlined to him when he was first commissioned to do it?

Does the member think that Iraq poses a threat within the next month, two months, three months or even four months to the United States or Canada?

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Chairman, that is a fair question. First, it should be clear, as our leader has said tonight, in terms of international law, as we stand here Iraq is in defiance and in contravention of a ceasefire that was signed. The ceasefire that was signed was based on certain conditions that Saddam Hussein would have to follow. He has violated those conditions for the last 12 years. International law would not be contravened if there were some kind of intervention now. We are not saying that must take place now but let us be clear on this area of international law.

Let us also be clear on something else. When we talk about law, at whatever level, lawyers, as per their training, must have the ability to argue either side of the law. I find it interesting when I hear, sometimes even in this House, that there is only one view of international law. When the word international is put in front of the word law it is as if there is only one view. No, there is more than one view. Clearly Saddam Hussein right now is in violation of that ceasefire.

Having said that, the position of the Canadian Alliance has been clear. We are showing perseverance and patience in working with the United Nations. If Dr. Blix is asking for some extended time, then we are saying that we should let that move ahead. However we should not go into this naively. We should go into it with our eyes wide open.

As I said in my remarks earlier, as we stand here these undisclosed weapons are available to other enemies of the western world. Every day we wait allows the possibility that those weapons will go into knapsacks, into barrels or into who knows what to be found in what cities, in what ventilation system or onto what airplane. Let us keep our eyes open and let us not be naive. Dr. Blix wants the extra time, but let us stand firm and make sure of what we are up against here.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Parliamentary secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, keeping in mind that the Iraqis are using computer systems with technology that is still using DOS and that they have had no new computer systems or new technology since 1991, we are expecting them to produce a complete report as though they had today's computers.

I wonder if the U.S. would be able to produce an accurate audit of their weapons of mass destruction within a period of 40 days. We all know what auditing systems are like. Let us take Enron for example.

Hans Blix has given Iraq a B minus. When did that become a failing grade?

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Chairman, the member is suggesting that poor Saddam Hussein, who is bursting to reveal all this stuff, is somehow constrained because he does not have the high tech capabilities.

Is the member aware that in 1989, when South Africa was required to give a full accounting to weapons inspectors, it was wide open, transparent and willing to do so without the DOS or whatever other equipment she says Saddam Hussein is lacking.

The Ukraine was the same. With the turnover of the Soviet empire, it was open and willing. It said "Come in. Here are our weapons of destruction. Help us get rid of them".

Kazakhstan was the same with the stockpiles of weapons it had. It opened up. It invited and pleaded with the world to come in and help it to clean up its weapons of mass destruction.

Saddam Hussein has never said that, DOS or not, and we do not think he ever will. That is why we have to enforce this resolution.

• (2130)

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I listened to the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition talk earlier about the importance of showing leadership. He said that if we show that leadership that probably will be the greatest opportunity to prevent war.

I would like the hon. member to give me his thoughts on why leadership is so important in a situation like this.

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Chairman, that question is a compelling one. Again, we can reflect back through history.

We have heard one member here say that there is no comparison between Saddam Hussein and somebody like Adolf Hitler. Indeed, there are comparisons. There truly are. A.J.P. Taylor pointed this out in his extensive work on the second world war and why it happened. He was very clear when he said that the allies should have shown leadership in the thirties in terms of standing up to Adolf Hitler by saying "you could face the force of the allied nations if you continue on this path". A noted historian said that because Hitler was convinced he would not face the risk or the possibility of a threat of force from the allies he continued on his pathway of devastation and destruction, because the allies did not show leadership.

That is why at moments like this, as the member has indicated, nations like Canada must show leadership. Unfortunately our ability to do that has been eroded. Every time the Prime Minister or some other member of the cabinet goes down to the United States they come back with a different position on this issue.

I feel badly for the Minister of National Defence. He went down to the United States last week, wandered around for a while, could not find anybody credible to talk with and came back and said "Here is what the position is going to be", and the Prime Minister had to turn around a day or two later and say "No, that is not going to be the position".

Government Orders

It is time for leadership, leadership of allied nations, democratic, freedom loving nations, that respect the human rights of all people. That type of leadership can prevail in this situation.

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, the Leader of Her Majesty's opposition said that Iraq was in non-compliance with resolution 1441.

I wonder if the member could outline that non-compliance but, more specifically, if nothing further occurs is that enough to go to war?

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Chairman, Dr. Blix has already outlined the non-compliance. If the Chairman will permit me, I will take the House's time to walk the member through it, but I see he is saying no. However I have already walked through the fact that there has been serious non-compliance.

I think the member was leading up to the question whether this constituted material breach? There is serious non-compliance right now. We have great concern. However with our eyes open for what Saddam Hussein could be doing right now, let us continue to work this through.

I would say to the member there are breaches when somebody has been asked to say where their supposed destroyed weaponry is or show that it has been destroyed and they cannot account for VX gas, the nerve gas which is so deadly, or for the ingredients that go into making thousands of gallons of anthrax, or for 6,500 chemical bombs.

We are showing patience and perseverance but I do not know for how much longer.

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I fear the former leader of the official opposition may have had a peek at my speech.

I welcome the opportunity to express my views on this grave issue of international peace and security. The matter of when to use force is the most critical issue any government can face. It must never be taken lightly and it must always be a last resort.

I have never encountered any Canadian who wishes to go to war. In that respect I think we are all, each and every one of us, peace activists.

For anyone who has seen the horrors of war, not from the surreal images that have flooded our TV screens in recent times, but up close at ground level, looking into the eyes of the people affected, it is something that one never ever forgets. The devastation, the loss, the shattered lives, the communities changed forever, the mental and physical scars, many of which never heal, are all part of the devastating cataclysmic horror of war.

I have seen firsthand the face of war in Sierra Leone and Guinea, where the poorest of the poor were brutalized in ways that defy the imagination.

I have seen the face of war in Kosovo and Bosnia, where societies dissolved into chaos and where mass murder and rape shattered the calm of what were ordinary lives. Anyone who has seen the effects of war at close quarters understands that it is to be avoided.

In as much as the revulsion against war is felt deeply throughout the world, at the dawn of the 21st century war regrettably has not vanished from our landscape. We seem to have learned little from the horrific decades of the 20th century. If we have learned anything, I hope it is that the forces of evil and aggression, those with no respect for human life or human rights, those that threaten the peace of the world must be confronted directly and decisively.

Over the years of the last century we have tried to fashion international organizations which provide us with the diplomatic and political tools to avoid conflict. The results of these efforts have been mixed, to say the least.

After the first world war, the League of Nations represented the best hope for enduring peace. It faltered grievously when its resolutions went unenforced and when the allies lost their collective will to uphold the disarmament of the Treaty of Versailles.

In dealing with the international crisis that we now face in Iraq, I cannot help but think of the words of Winston Churchill who, in speaking on the situation in Europe in the 1930s, noted and I quote:

—the strict enforcement at any time till 1934 of the disarmament clauses of the Peace Treaty would have guarded indefinitely, without violence or bloodshed, the peace and safety of mankind. But this was neglected while the infringements remained petty and shunned as they assumed serious proportions. Thus, the final safeguard of a long peace was cast away. The crimes of the vanquished find their background and their explanation, though not, of course, their pardon, in the follies of the victors. Without these follies crime would have found neither temptation nor opportunity.

While different in geopolitical terms, there are in my view too many haunting parallels between the regime of Adolf Hitler and the regime of Saddam Hussein. In the cold light of history we know all too well Hitler's crimes against his own people, against his neighbours and against humanity.

Saddam Hussein's grim legacy, although smaller in scale when we count the million casualties from the Iran-Iraq war and the thousands who perished because of his invasion of Kuwait and his persecution of the Kurds, still places him firmly in the category of one of humanity's truly prolific mass murderers.

Hitler skilfully dodged the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles to rearm and re-equip his Nazi regime with the most modern and destructive weapons of the time. Saddam too has skilfully dodged the provisions of almost a dozen UN Security Council resolutions. In the words of chief weapons inspector Hans Blix, "Iraq appears not to have come to the genuine acceptance, not even today, of the disarmament that was demanded of it".

While Hitler's lack of compliance with the Treaty of Versailles was clearly evident to the international community in terms of planes, battleships, tanks and submarines, Saddam Hussein's arsenal is easily hidden, but potentially much more destructive. A single 122 millimetre rocket shell of the type recently uncovered by weapons inspectors when filled with VX nerve agent, fired into a stadium could easily extinguish the lives of between 20,000 and 60,000 people.

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• (2135)

Saddam, again, according to Mr. Blix, has still failed to account for significant quantities of biological and chemical weapons, including stocks of VX nerve gas, two tonnes of nutrients or growth media for biological agents such as anthrax, 550 artillery shells with mustard gas and 6,500 chemical bombs. While some may see Saddam's lack of compliance as technical violations, anyone familiar with the destructive capability of these weapons would see these violations for what they are; material breaches of the so-called last chance United Nations resolution 1441.

While some have suggested that they wish to see a smoking gun in terms of proof, Mr. Blix put this issue to rest on Monday in his statement to the Security Council. He reasserted the role of weapons inspectors as disarmament verifiers rather than sleuths or detectives trying to find the proverbial needle in the haystack. Blix stated, and I quote:

As we know, the twin operation 'declare and verify', which was prescribed in resolution 687 (1991), too often turned into a game of 'hide and seek'. Rather than just verifying declarations and supporting evidence, the two inspecting organizations found themselves engaged in efforts to map the weapons programmes and to search for evidence through inspections, interviews, seminars, inquiries with suppliers and intelligence organizations.

While Blix conceded that the Iraqi regime was co-operating on process but not on substance, the fact remains that after 12 years of evasion, frustration, deceit and obstruction, disarmament of the regime of Saddam Hussein remains an elusive goal.

When confronting a criminal regime of the sort that we face in Iraq, our history should tell us clearly that it is a hard message that must be delivered and nothing short of full compliance is acceptable. A failure to convey a strong, clear message is always interpreted as weakness and a lack of resolve. To force compliance to the will of the international community is, regrettably, often necessary to threaten the use of armed force or, as a last resort, to employ armed force to compel compliance to preserve international peace and security.

In the preface to his award winning series on the second world war, Churchill, who once addressed this chamber during the darker days of the second world war, spoke about how the war could have been prevented. He noted, and I quote:

—how the malice of the wicked was reinforced by the weakness of the virtuous; how the structure and habits of democratic states, unless they are welded into larger organisms, lack those elements of persistence and conviction which can alone give security to humble masses; how, even in matters of self-preservation, no policy is pursued for even ten or fifteen years at a time. We shall see how the counsels of prudence and restraint may become the prime agents of mortal danger; how the middle course adopted from desires for safety and a quiet life may be found to lead direct to the bull's-eye of disaster. We shall see how absolute is the need of a broad path of international action pursued by many states in common across the years, irrespective of the ebb and flow of national politics.

Although time is running out for the regime of Saddam Hussein, some of us still cling to the hope that Iraq might disarm without a single shot being fired and without a single life lost. Failing that, I very much hope we will see a united and concentrated effort through the United Nations to disarm this regime and to ensure that the collective will of the international community prevails.

Should the United Nations fail to accept its responsibility and enforce its resolutions, I believe that this country working with our

traditional allies, the United States, Great Britain, Australia and others, should, indeed must, keep its options open in terms of participating in a coalition of like-minded countries to disarm the regime. We have seen the United Nations fail to take effective action in the past in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda.

In the final analysis as the next few weeks unfold, we will hopefully have the benefit of more information from Mr. Blix, Mr. Powell and the regime of Saddam Hussein. Reflecting on our values as Canadians, I earnestly hope that we will be able to make a decision which contributes tangibly to international peace and security.

• (2140)

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, I particularly want to commend the member for his very thoughtful remarks. He reminds me in his remarks that there tends to be one general position in this debate, and only one, which is making reference to history, as he has done so eloquently.

I would concur with his conclusion that Canada ought to keep its options open to join allies in action to enforce the Security Council resolutions should the United Nations itself fail to do so. However, I would like to ask him if he would agree that the potential to avoid a real conflict, a real war, in Iraq would be lessened if allied countries continue the threat of force through positioning forces in the region as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and others have done.

In other words, would he agree that Canada should consider or at least begin plans for the possible placement of forces in the region to underscore the very message which I think he has articulated in his speech, that is, that there will be consequences should Iraq fail to comply?

• (2145)

Mr. David Pratt: Madam Chairman, the threat of force is obviously a critical component with respect to the current situation we face in Iraq. Obviously the Americans have taken that view very seriously. They have pre-positioned probably in excess of 100,000 troops now. As well, the British are in the process of moving 30,000 troops into the region. The threat of force at this point is in fact very credible. Saddam Hussein certainly can be under no illusions that elements of the international community feel very strongly about disarmament of the regime and intend to pursue that course of action.

The problem that we get into, of course, is the issue of whether or not the Security Council may or may not act. Canada as a middle power obviously has traditionally taken the position that we want to work through multilateral institutions. That has been our position in the past. I think that we have tried over many years to ensure that the rule of law replaces the rule of the jungle, and I think we have been very effective at that.

Having said that, let me say that I think we are going to have to wait to see what unfolds over the next little while. I think most people certainly were under the impression that the situation in Iraq was going to take a while to unfold as far as the role of the weapons inspectors was concerned, on how that work was going to proceed and whether or not the necessary level of co-operation was going to exist.

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Certainly many of us were surprised by the tone of Mr. Blix's report. I believe it was a very hard message that he delivered, which I think will put the regime of Saddam Hussein in a very difficult position over the coming weeks. Saddam Hussein is either going to have to comply very quickly and demonstrate co-operation very quickly or he is going to be dealt with, perhaps through the Security Council, perhaps through another means.

I do not think we are in a position right now to make a judgment. Things are moving so quickly at this point that I think it is probably prudent to wait to see what sort of information Mr. Powell produces, what further information Mr. Blix produces, and whether or not the regime is going to comply.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Madam Chairman, my colleague across the way has made some comments about the application of the rule of law. I have two questions.

If the United Nations were to authorize a mandate to use military force against the regime in Iraq, would the member agree with me that there is no one else in the world who can determine whether that mandate is in compliance with international law and the charter of the United Nations, that in fact the only people in this country who can determine whether in fact we should follow that mandate are the people who sit in the House? Therefore, would he agree that we should have a vote in the House before a determination is made as to whether we comply with the mandate and involve ourselves in a military action?

There are two questions. Are we the final decision makers? Second, should we have a vote?

Mr. David Pratt: Madam Chairman, if we go back to the practice in the House over the last 50 or 60 years, dating back to the second world war, obviously there was a declaration of war on September 10, 1939, I think it was, when Canada declared war against Nazi Germany. Since then, however, the record has been mixed in terms of whether or not Parliament has voted on the deployment and engagement of Canadians troops abroad.

We saw a significant delay, for instance, when Canadian troops went to Korea. I do not believe there was a debate in the House. I think the troops went sometime in the summer of 1950 and the House did not come back until September or October. If we look at the record we will see that Mr. St. Laurent said at the time that it was the role of the executive to determine whether or not Canada went to war and the House had its say on the basis of the appropriations for the war.

We had a vote in 1990 when the gulf war occurred. I do not believe we had a vote dealing with Kosovo in 1999. It really has been a rather mixed record.

Clearly the one thing we have to keep in mind when we are dealing with grave matters of international crisis is that it becomes very difficult under certain circumstances. This is a factor that has to be borne in mind in terms of what the public believes is the view of Parliament. If the executive, based on intelligence information and other information that it has available, working with its allies, feels very strongly, and I am saying this hypothetically, that Canada must be involved in an armed conflict, and if that were to be put to a vote in the House without all of the members necessarily being aware of all the information that is involved, we could end up with a very

mixed message. A very mixed message could be sent to the people whose co-operation and compliance, in connection with UN resolutions perhaps, we are trying to coerce in abiding by the will of the international community. I think that is a consideration.

Perhaps in the years to come we will have more parliamentary jurisprudence on this which will determine a particular course of action that meets all the needs of Parliament to discuss these issues. We are having this debate tonight, which I think is important, but at the same time there are some other factors that have to be borne in mind.

● (2150)

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, it is interesting to listen to the hon. member. His presentation was indeed well thought out, but what struck me is how different it was from the other presentations on his side of the House. When we listen to the members of our party, we will see that there are a lot of common themes in the comments made, because there is some common background given to caucus, I think.

I would like to ask the member whether in his caucus there have been substantial discussions on this issue of the war in Iraq. Have the members of his caucus been given common information on the war? If so, why does his presentation quite frankly sound more like a Canadian Alliance presentation, and that is a compliment, than the many and varied presentations from that side of the House?

Mr. David Pratt: Madam Chairman, the hon. member has a funny way of delivering compliments.

The one thing that is evident on this side of the House is freedom of thought on this issue. We have the opportunity to express our views on this issue. That is what this sort of debate is all about and I think it is extremely important.

There is a singularity of purpose to a flock of sheep as well in terms of consistency of mind on these things, but at the same time there may not be a lot of intellectual light generated from that exercise.

I think that this debate is a healthy one. Obviously it is an opportunity for members to express their views and to be heard on this issue. I certainly hope that members will avail themselves of that opportunity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Chairman, first of all, I find the debate most interesting. The fewer the members present, the more civilized the debate, I find. When we were many, a while ago, tensions were running high. I feel it is important for all parties and members to be able to express their views fully in this debate. This is an important debate for us all.

To begin with, I will give a bit of background. It seems to me important to talk about what the UN is. I have been asking questions the last while in support of the UN and I had a reason for so doing. We must remember that, right after the end of the war, the international community wondered about finding a way to settle disputes on the Planet Earth through international cooperation.

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This is important, because when fundamental problems are discussed in the UN and the international community decides that action must be taken in this or that instance, this puts terrible pressure on those who are engaged in wrongdoing, those who believe in the law of the jungle.

Before the UN, the law of the jungle prevailed. The one with the most weapons, or the most strength, was the top animal, the one who made the decisions and could eat up the neighbour and take over his territory. The problem kept on worsening until the international community realized that it had gone too far and things were becoming dangerous for everyone. Then the UN intervened.

The creation of the UN is important. It has the international legitimacy to settle disputes. The UN is useful where Iraq is concerned.

In my opinion, it is dangerous to allow the super powers to make the decisions. If they make a mistake, there are terrible consequences for the rest of the planet. It is therefore important for things to go through an international forum when there are problems such as the one facing us today to be settled.

Now I want to give a brief background on what has led to this conflict with Iraq. Why Iraq? We need to keep in mind that, after the gulf war, an inspection system was set in place, which ran until 1998. Suddenly, the Iraqi government announced that it could no longer tolerate having inspectors on its territory and asked them to leave.

Incidentally, several inspectors were accused of espionage and it was later revealed that it was true. There were spies among the American or international observers. They were simply spying on Iraq.

What happened is that, from 1998 to 2002, the United States was silent on the issue of returning to Iraq to monitor the situation. Why was there this four-year period of silence in the United States?

Of course, some will say that it ended because of September 11. Indeed, September 11 was a factor, which led to the hunt for bin Laden and, in the end, we never did catch him, and he is still on the run.

There was a point in this situation when I thought the President of the United States appeared a bit crazy. They went into Afghanistan and never found bin Laden, and we still do not know where he is.

It seems to me as though it was quite easy for the United States to say, "we need to find someone else. We need to have a new world order, and a new order in the Middle East". Maybe this is what the Americans said to themselves.

Thus was reborn the spectre of Saddam Hussein. For four years, nobody worried about him, and then suddenly in 2002, we had to take care of him.

What happened is that the United States looked very serious, to the point where the international community—through the UN, in fact—said, "we had better get involved and discuss what we are going to do about the problem in Iraq together".

That is how it happened. The UN started to discuss it. From there came resolution 1441. We have to ask ourselves if resolution 1441 is now sufficient to justify unilateral intervention by the United States.

Our belief is that it is not. There is good reason that article 14 states that the UN and the Security Council decides to remain seized of the matter.

This means that they want to reconsider the situation. In English it says "revisit". They want to see again if there is evidence, and if so, decide what to do then. That is giving peace a chance. That is in article 14.

In the meantime, the U.S. comes up with a new international doctrine on international law: preventive force, or preventive strikes.

• (2155)

It is a return to the law of the jungle. The UN is being ignored. People are justifying the fact that the United States of America can say that if it thinks that its security or the security of one of its allies is in danger, it reserves the right to intervene, which would be done without consulting the UN.

Therefore, we have a problem here. If the United States can ignore what the UN is doing and carry out its own justice, explain to me what is preventing Pakistan from attacking India because they will say "If the United States can do it with Iraq, we can do it too".

What is preventing North Korea from attacking South Korea, on the basis that the new international doctrine of international law allows pre-emptive strikes?

There is an imminent danger with this type of approach and we, necessarily, favour an international approach. This does not change Canada's sovereignty or that of the United States. If fact, if the UN announces a second resolution and states that it is ready to take armed action to resolve the situation with Iraq, each of the countries on the Security Council will have to seek a mandate from their people.

This leads me to my second point regarding the vote. A mandate from the people does not just mean that the Prime Minister and his cabinet decide. We have been saying from the start that we want to have a vote if we deploy armed forces.

Regarding Kyoto, we were told that it was very important to hold a vote in the House; on the next bill concerning political financing, the House is calling for a vote of confidence. So why, when it comes time to mobilize the army and send it to do battle in a dangerous theatre of operations, are we not holding such a debate in the House?

It is all very fine and well to have take-note debates. But when the time comes to decide, we are no longer involved. Afghanistan is a good example.

The last time we held a take-note debate, the moorings had been cast off and the boats were on their way to Afghanistan. And we were going to have a take-note debate. What for, I ask you, when the boats had already left? Certainly, they were not going to be made to turn around and come back.

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Parliament must make the decision; the elected representatives of the people, the members, must vote on such an important issue as this.

I was listening to the hon. member for Nepean—Carleton, who said earlier that it really has been a rather mixed record.

During the gulf war, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the current leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, moved a motion in the House to hold a vote on whether Canada should participate in the war. The motion read as follows:

That this House, noting that the Government of Iraq has not complied with the United Nations Security Council resolutions concerning the invasion of Kuwait and the detention of third country nationals, supports the United Nations in its efforts to ensure compliance with Security Council resolution 660 and subsequent resolutions.

Herb Gray, who was in the opposition at the time—I can say his name because he is no longer here—had introduced an amendment. It said, “that this support shall not be interpreted as approval of the use of Canadian Forces for offensive action without further consultation with and approval by this House”.

He felt this was important when he was in the opposition. He said, “Liberals insist that before Canadians are called upon to participate in any offensive action, such participation must first be brought before parliament and voted on here in the way it was done at the time of the Korean conflict”.

An hon. member: Who said that?

Mr. Claude Bachand: Herb Gray.

Today the Liberals are in power, and it is no longer important, it is forgotten. You understand that we do not entirely agree; we think that it is important, as important as the environment and political party financing.

The decision to send Quebeckers and Canadians to war requires not only consultation and a take note debate, but also an official debate followed by a vote. That is how the voice of the members is heard, and I think it is important in a democracy. I also think that the Prime Minister and Canada would gain greater legitimacy.

When the Americans decide to go to war, I do not think that the U.S. President can ignore the Senate or the House of Representatives. There were debates, and the United States was given the mandate before the holidays.

That is not the case here. So far, we have been told that the debate did not matter. The Prime Minister and cabinet are the ones who will decide.

● (2200)

We have a problem with that. We think that it is important that such major decisions affecting the younger generation of Canadians and Quebeckers first be put to a vote in this House.

In summary, as far as we are concerned, the UN plays a major role without infringing on the sovereignty of any country. I think that it is very important that we have a vote in the House. If the Prime Minister decides against it, this may be because there is a problem within his party.

This evening, we have heard very different views expressed by the hon. members present. We think it is important that all members vote on this issue.

● (2205)

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, earlier this evening the chief of the member's party agreed that for killing hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Kurds, for ordering the killing of 60,000 Shi'ites, for all the unnecessary deaths of society's most vulnerable people, our women, children and the disabled, and for the continued torture, mutilation of children with acid, that Saddam Hussein should be brought before an international court and charged with war crimes. The member's chief agreed to that.

Given everything he said today, my question for the member is, how should Saddam Hussein be apprehended and brought to justice?

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Madam Chairman, I will obviously reiterate what my leader said. Saddam Hussein is no saint. He will no doubt have to account for his actions to the international community, perhaps not in the next few weeks, but certainly at some point in time. The Milosevic affair was not resolved overnight either. Granted—another member inquired about Kosovo—the international community was indeed forced to act outside the auspices of the UN because Russia had used its veto. I am not saying it should always work that way. If the UN is unable to take action as an international instrument, there will certainly be another debate in this place, and other decisions might be made at that time.

We in the Bloc Québécois wish to state right off that we have such confidence in the UN that, where Iraq is concerned, we would not be prepared to follow the United States in a unilateral move that did not take the UN into account. That we have already said. Although there are some members who have just claimed they do not look at the polls, we do use them cautiously. There are 62% of Canadians and Quebeckers who do not agree with following the Americans into a war without Security Council approval.

I think that Saddam Hussein must pay for what he has done. History will be the judge, but I am certain that the books will judge him a tyrant and a murderer. The time will come for him to be brought to international judgment.

[English]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, I have heard from the member in his presentation and from many other members in the House today, especially from the governing party but from the other opposition parties as well, that we should give Saddam Hussein more time. The question that has to be asked is how much more time?

The first resolution that Saddam Hussein agreed to, which started this process since the gulf war, was United Nations Security Council resolution 687 which laid out the conditions of the ceasefire. In that resolution which Saddam Hussein agreed to, the onus was on Saddam Hussein to turn over to the weapons inspectors all of his weapons of mass destruction. It was not the responsibility of the inspectors to find them, which is like looking for a needle in the haystack; the responsibility was on Saddam Hussein to turn the weapons over to them so that they could either destroy or supervise the destruction of these weapons.

The United Nations itself put some numbers to these weapons shortly after the gulf war. It said there were about 30,000 empty chemical warheads found, about 550 artillery shells with mustard gas, 400 biological weapons, 26,000 litres of anthrax, as well as botulinum, VX nerve agent, sarin gas and so on. That is what the United Nations weapons inspectors said that Saddam Hussein had and that is what the weapons inspectors say has not been accounted for to this date. Very little of this product has been accounted for to date and it is 11 years later.

We have gone through a series of 15 resolutions now, always trying to fill a loophole that Saddam Hussein found which he used as an excuse not to comply with the initial ceasefire agreement. We have given him 11 years.

The inspectors have expressed concern that he is continuing to build weapons of mass destruction. We know he would use them because he has used them already on tens of thousands of people, and he has threatened us. He is complicit with dozens of terrorists groups that have made it very clear they would be all too willing to use the weapons on western countries, including Canada.

I have to ask the member, knowing all this and knowing the very real threat that Saddam Hussein and his regime pose to our country and to other western nations, just how much time should we give this dictator?

• (2210)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Madam Chairman, I thank my colleague for the good question. I am not saying how much time we are going to allow Saddam Hussein. I am asking rather how much time we will allow the peace process to get to the bottom of the matter and settle this conflict without its becoming an armed conflict. That is the way the question needs to be worded.

To make an aside, here, from 1998 to 2002 we did not hear any insistence from the U.S. about bringing back the observers. They did not say "They have just been expelled. We will start bringing pressure to bear to get them back in." From 1998 to 2002 there was not a word.

As for the contacts with terrorists, one might well ask whether there really are any. I recall what General Schwartzkopf said, after installing all his satellites, which I am sure are still in place. He said this:

[*English*]

"Iraq cannot blink without us knowing it".

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[*Translation*]

In my opinion, if the products that the hon. member mentioned were given to terrorists, the Americans would react immediately. If they are not doing so, it is because this is not happening and there is another reason for the Americans wanting to go to war. We talked about it earlier. It could be oil, or perhaps they want to settle and old score.

What is certain is that the international community, through the UN, is there to manage this crisis. The law of the jungle no longer prevails, although, in my opinion, the Americans want to bring it back. They are the biggest lions on the planet and they will eat the biggest chunks of the planet. So, it is important that we remain under the aegis of the UN. Let us give peace time to work. Let us give peace all the chances and time necessary to work.

[*English*]

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Madam Chairman, I am very pleased to represent my constituents in this debate tonight.

I have never received as many e-mails, letters and faxes as I have over this past number of weeks. They increased after statements were made by my colleagues and when it became a little more ambiguous a few weeks ago about where exactly we stood. I have never received the same sentiment before in my riding.

It is interesting to hear differing visions and different comments from constituents of other members. They sound different than what the constituents in my riding are saying. This is the first time 100% of the people in my riding who have contacted me to date are saying the same thing. That is significant. It is something in which I personally believe. They are saying that we should wait until we have the approval of the only multilateral process that has been proven over time and in which we are engaged. That is the voice of the world today. This is the voice of international law and that is the UN.

From the time of Pearson, we have stood for something in this country. The values of Canada are with due process. There is no rush to go to war just because we can. There is no rush to go to war just because the weather may have changed in some other part or there may be something there.

Our Prime Minister has said to us that we need proof. He said it in a very charming way. The bottom line is we do need proof. Perhaps next week the presentations made at the UN will provide some proof. We do not have sufficient proof today. It is a fluid situation.

No one in my constituency is naive enough to think that if there are gases and weapons of mass destruction, if there is imminent threat and if people in another country are absolutely ignoring the UN wishes through resolution 1441 that we should not act. However it should not be a unilateral action. It should not be just because we have friends, allies and economic interests with the people south of the border with whom we have relations. That is not sufficient reason.

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The idea of a pre-emptive strike is foreign to us and should be foreign to anyone in the world who wants peace. It is a system that we will continue in this century. Pre-emptive strikes; what a strange thing. I do not want to find out how smart the bombs are today. It is not important to me. It is important that Canadians can be represented in a parliament. It is important that I can flip on my television and see parliamentarians in England or people demonstrating in the streets around the world asking for due process to happen and saying not to rush to war. It is important to me that our allies respect that we have a voice in Canada that is separate and apart.

I live in southwestern Ontario. Most of the bilateral trade we share between two great nations is done through the bridges very close to my city. I understand the economic integration issues and the need for our countries to be supportive. I realize that is a consideration, but it is not the only consideration.

I stood at a peace rally on a very cold day with many other Canadians, as did many others in different cities. The peace rally was organized by the Muslim community. There are 30,000 Muslim Canadians living in my city of London, Ontario. They organized the rally together with multi-faith communities. The former Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church was a speaker. The United Church, the Anglican Church, the Jewish community and many multi-faith religions stood together. There were people from non-government organizations and immigrant organizations. People from Iraq, who are now Canadians and live in my city spoke. There were children, young, old and women. They all spoke about the need for us to take the time to make war the very last resort.

• (2215)

If inspectors need more time, we should give them more time. If there is a need for more inspectors, we should get more inspectors. It is certainly cheaper than the cost of one day's war. There is not a rush. This cannot take forever. I am one who would say that if the UN regrettably has sufficient proof, we have to take action and my government decides to take a stand in terms of being of some assistance in a multilateral action sanctioned by the United Nations, then I understand the need.

Some people in my riding who have contacted me over the past number of weeks have gone further than I have. They do not want war even if proof is there. That is not my stand. I do not think that is responsible. If we are a member nation of the United Nations, we have to take our place and pull our weight where we can.

When I was growing up my father was in the armed forces, the RCAF and before that the RAF, and I lived on military bases throughout my early education. I know what it means when a father or a parent goes away for months on a mission. I know the pride of our defence personnel and I know that they would serve with honour wherever they were sent. That is not the issue. The issue is how in this century we will deal with these situations.

About this time last year I went to Sierra Leone to help train some women to run for their parliamentary elections. We saw the ravages of war. It was a low tech war. I would hate to see the devastation of a high tech war. I know that there is human error. Even when we have incredibly efficient weapons like missiles, people get killed. I remember our former colleague, Mr. Axworthy, reminded us of the

change over time and what actually happened in wars. Before it was military men and women who were the thousands of casualties. Now it is more often civilians.

I do not want to knock the United States. That is not the aim of my conversation with my colleagues tonight. However sometimes the United States seems to talk about short wars and quick wars. It is not over and done with after the bombs are dropped for the people whose economies are destroyed, whose homes are devastated, whose families are shattered and whose governments are in tatters with a parliamentary system that has to be re-established without transport or clean water.

There has been an ongoing situation in this country for many years, from the last time that there was a war in this area, where there have been economic sanctions with which we have agreed. People have still suffered and it has not turned the situation around.

I am here tonight to add my voice of my constituents to ensure that in my representative role I have told the House what they have told me and to say that there is a good process in place. This process would allow the proof that is needed for a decision to be made and it is this process that I hope our country will follow.

• (2220)

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Chairman, I commend the hon. member for standing with many of her constituents and speaking out against the possibility of war on the people of Iraq who have already suffered so tragically as a result of the economic sanctions which this Parliament in the foreign affairs committee unanimously recommended be lifted.

I see one of the members of that committee joined in that eloquent plea which to date has fallen on the deaf ears of her own government.

First, does the hon. member agree with the position that is taken by her colleague, the Liberal chair of the defence committee, who has said that there is no need for United Nations support, that Canada should join in a U.S.-led coalition of the willing? To quote him, he said:

We were prepared to say, "If the UN doesn't approve military action in Iraq, then we're not going. I think that's an abdication of a national responsibility".

That is the position of the chair of the defence committee. The national defence minister in Washington, D.C. took a similar position. The Minister of Foreign Affairs had another position. The Prime Minister had yet another position, on which we are not quite clear.

Could the hon. member perhaps enlighten the House and through the House, Canadians, as to where the Liberal government stands on this issue?

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Second, and very important, because the member is one for whom I have great respect and she has been in the House for a while, does she not agree that on an issue this fundamental, that if indeed it comes to the point that Canadian men and women are called into military action under the umbrella of a United Nations resolution or otherwise, that each and every member of the House should have the right to vote, not just to debate but to vote, on that fundamental question?

Mrs. Sue Barnes: Madam Chairman, the Liberal Party is a big tent. It is very good that we are a big tent. It is very good that we are allowed to stand in a Parliament and express our views. The fact that another colleague of mine has a different opinion does not bother me. Perhaps their constituents are saying something different to them.

What does concern me is that we have the process in place at the UN and if the resolution of the UN goes forward, whatever it is, then I would stand with that without having the vote in the House.

This is my personal opinion. I do not speak for my party. If the situation was that the UN did not sanction any action but the United States wished to go unilaterally, and there was some discussion about whether Canada should join that action, that would be a situation where I would prefer a vote in the House.

• (2225)

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, the member opposite said in her remarks that the United Nations is the only multilateral institution that works in situations such as this. I think I am accurately paraphrasing her.

If that is the case, then how does she explain the support that her party, and perhaps she could comment on whether she was included in this, gave to NATO to engage unilaterally, quite explicitly outside the ambit of the United Nations Security Council, to prohibit the government of Serbia from ethnic cleansing in Kosovo? Did she support that unilateral, non-UN sanctioned action at the time? If so, is she not prepared to admit that there are times when the UN is indeed fallible? That responsible democracies from time to time must take action when the UN system simply does not work. Would she not agree with me that the failure of the UN to act in Rwanda, was a object lesson in the failure of the United Nations sometimes to use force appropriately to protect human lives?

I ask this again very specifically. If the UN is always the only multilateral institution through which we can legitimately act, then why did her government and presumably herself support the NATO action in Kosovo and endorse the 1998 bombing strikes against Iraq which were not explicitly authorized through the UN Security Council but indeed was a "unilateral" military action led by the United States which Canada supported?

Mrs. Sue Barnes: Madam Chairman, in the context of whether or not there should be pre-emptive strikes, the answer is no, I am not in favour of pre-emptive strikes. In the context of is this the only multilateral organization that Canada is engaged with, obviously it is not. However in the context of whether a Security Council resolution that is currently standing and affects the particular situation we are in right now, the only place that we should be going that has the capacity to give effective multilateral action at this time is the Security Council. I firmly believe in that.

There have been situations in history where genocides have been ongoing. Has the UN ever made a mistake in the past? I think the member cited something regarding Rwanda with which I would agree.

Having made a mistake in the past, does that mean people should take it into their own hands unilaterally at a time when every action has a reaction not only with the immediate neighbours, but around the world?

We can quibble with the words. I think we all know what we are talking about when we talk about due process and established international law. There is a difference. I do not need proof when I see somebody slaughtered in the same manner that I need proof when I have to find some weapons in this situation.

The situation is that we have the time. We can take the time. I do not understand the colleagues in the House who seem eager for what reasons I do not understand to rush to the conclusion that the only resolution is military action as opposed to dialogue.

We have to be prepared to take more forceful action if it is necessary. That is not in dispute. However that is not the action that I hope and expect my government to take in this case.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Chairman, I want to come back to a very important question about the role of the House and particularly the role of elected representatives.

Did I understand the member from London to be saying that if the United Nations Security Council authorized military action against Iraq, she would agree that Canada should participate in that without the House and without the elected members of the House being given an opportunity to vote on behalf of their constituents about that fundamentally important decision? Is that what she is saying? If that is what she is saying, how on earth can she justify that?

She may think that is an appropriate position to take, to send men and women into war after reviewing the evidence. That may be her position, but each and every member of the House surely has the right to vote on behalf of their constituents.

I know she has a constituency in which there would be many people opposed to that, particularly from the Arab and Muslim Canadian communities.

Why is there contempt for the role of elected representatives? Why would she not support the right to vote even in the event of a UN Security Council authorized military action?

• (2230)

Mrs. Sue Barnes: Madam Chairman, the simple reason is that it is the law of the land that the executive has the right in that situation.

With respect to the Muslim community in my riding, they were active in the resolution that was put before the people at our peace rally and that was following the UN Security Council resolutions.

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Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, if my hon. colleague receives an engraved notice of intention to gas or attack the people of North America, as a member of the government, would she kindly share that with the rest of the people of Canada in advance of attack as well?

Mrs. Sue Barnes: Madam Chairman, a very quick answer is that is not a worthy question.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, I am very pleased to take part in this debate.

Over the years, Canada has built its global reputation and domestic pride on standing decisively with the international community and our allies in defending peace and security.

A credible threat of military force is a crucial stage in the escalation of diplomatic pressure. It is the only kind of diplomacy that Saddam Hussein has ever understood. In 1995 it forced him to back away from the Kuwaiti border when he had amassed troops in that area to attack Kuwait once again, four short years after the end of the gulf war. Only the amassment of American troops in large numbers encouraged him to back away from that. Last year it forced him to readmit weapons inspectors. Now the credible threat of military force may be our last chance to avoid war in Iraq.

The credible threat of military force is a diplomatic option which we simply cannot afford to bypass. Unfortunately it is a tool not currently included in Canada's diplomatic or military toolbox. There is too little Canada can contribute to an international effort to disarm Iraq.

While our allies mount a significant display of international force in the face of Iraqi recalcitrance, Canada's military is gasping for breath on the sidelines. The government has refused time and time again to give any indication of what the Canadian Forces might be prepared to contribute to the effort to disarm Saddam Hussein. That is probably partly because the government cannot decide whether or not it wants to join the effort at all, but it is partly because Canada's military will have to scrimp and scrape to find equipment and personnel to send should that decision be made.

It is the remarkable adaptability, the professionalism and the perseverance of our serving men and women that has allowed Canada to portray our military contribution as credible. It is only the remarkable actions and effort on their part that allows us to portray our military as being credible.

The sorry state of the Canadian Forces is a direct result of a decade of Liberal neglect. As a point of contrast, let us look at what Canada contributed to the war in Iraq in 1991 just before the Liberals took office.

We had 4,000 Canadian Forces personnel serving in Iraq, with up to 2,500 in that theatre at one time, plus a field hospital of 550 staff in Saudi Arabia. We had 2,000 more military personnel operating in Canada and Germany in direct support of the war in Iraq. We had 34 CF-18 fighter jets with up to 26 in theatre at a time, plus a Boeing 707 in-flight refueller.

The navy provided two destroyers and a supply ship, with a total of six Sea King helicopters. I want to remind everyone that of course

the Sea King helicopters were 12 years newer than they are now. There were actually some pilots who were older than the machine at that time. We just will not find that now.

Canada cannot come close to matching that level of commitment today. This contribution in the gulf war was not decisive to the outcome of the war but it was adequate to maintain Canada's credibility and respectability as a nation committed to working with the international community to protect peace and democracy and to uphold international law.

Thanks to a decade of neglect under the government, Canada can no longer command such respect. Any military contribution we can make to the international effort against Iraq today will be indirect and small from a military point of view, and even less when it comes to a diplomatic point of view, because we simply do not have that kind of respect any more.

I want to talk a little about what Canada could contribute to a military effort, either to help provide that deterrence, which is the only thing that Saddam Hussein seems to understand, or to actually be involved in a war in Iraq should that happen.

From the air force point of view, we could provide one or two Auroras for surveillance and one or two Hercules aircraft for tactical transport. The CF-18s are not near the numbers that were provided in the gulf war but they would be limited to operations to protect the base of operations. Because they do not have a communications system which is compatible with that of our allies, they would not be able to take part in a combat role. We would have to borrow, by the way, in-air refuelling just to get our CF-18s over to Iraq. That is the state our air force is in now.

● (2235)

The navy has four or five ships. Three ships are in the area now.

There are insufficient air crews to man our Sea Kings. Even right now we have had frigates go out without helicopters on board because either we do not have the crews or the helicopters simply are not available because of their high repair and maintenance schedules.

In terms of the army, we could likely make a contribution similar to the one in Afghanistan, about 800 troops, including JTF2 and light infantry.

In committee before Christmas, the head of the army, General Jeffery, said that we could provide 300 troops if absolutely necessary, but he said there would be an incredible price to pay. We had better look at any of these commitments; with any of these commitments, there would be a price to pay.

First, any contribution as large as I have laid out here in any one of the services would cause severe strain for our troops and their families. They have been over-deployed already, to the extent that they are having more family problems than they have ever had before. Many of our well trained, very professional soldiers simply are not willing to stay in the military under these circumstances and many are suffering from severe operational stresses and injuries. One just cannot keep up that kind of schedule year after year.

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Second, the commitment I talked about for the army is hypothetical because we do not have the strategic airlift to get our troops and their equipment there.

For example, for the flood in Manitoba and for the ice storm here in the Ottawa area and in Quebec, we managed to borrow strategic airlift from the United States so we could move our troops and their equipment to help with those very serious circumstances. For Afghanistan we managed to borrow and beg from our allies strategic airlift to get there.

With the size of the commitment in the area of Iraq, we simply cannot count on getting the strategic airlift needed from our friends and our neighbours to get our troops there. It is highly questionable as to whether we could find a way to get our troops and our equipment there, and we do not have the sealift either. The size of commitment that Canada could make is much less than it was even when the government came into office almost 10 years ago.

I would like to summarize the need for having the military capability to help provide that deterrent, the only thing that Saddam Hussein understands, the threat of force, the very real threat of force. I have heard many members tonight question that there is a serious threat that we all face. Many have said, "What threat do we face here in Canada?" I would like to remind people.

First, Saddam's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction pose a grave threat to international peace and security. Saddam could use these weapons for mass terror or transfer them to terrorist allies. He has many allies when it comes to terrorist groups. We have seen a list of them. The weapons inspectors and others have come up with lists of groups that are quite willing to work with Saddam Hussein. We know that threat is very real.

In terms of weapons of mass destruction, the Iraqi regime has developed weapons of mass destruction, defying numerous UN Security Council resolutions. I mentioned this before; 15 resolutions and they have ignored every one of them. Resolution 1441 is the latest. The weapons inspectors said clearly Iraq's regime is simply not complying.

All those weapons of mass destruction, the roughly 30,000 chemical warheads, the 550 artillery shells filled with mustard gas, the 400 biological weapons, the 26,000 litres of anthrax, as well as botulinum, VX nerve agent and sarin gas, are not pretty weapons that we are talking about. Most of these deadly weapons of mass destruction have not been accounted for.

A UN resolution put in place the ceasefire. There never was an armistice to end the gulf war; there was a ceasefire. We are still operating under a ceasefire and Saddam Hussein agreed to the terms of that ceasefire. He agreed to turn all weapons of mass destruction over to UN weapons inspectors. The United Nations and the weapons inspectors say very clearly that he has not complied.

• (2240)

What more proof do we need that the threat is very real and is still there? What dictator in the nature of Saddam Hussein has ever done something like that in secret? How many in this House are really willing to take him at his word that Iraq has destroyed its weapons of mass destruction? I suggest that there would be no one. I hope there would be no one after giving this situation clear thought.

Hon. Gar Knutson (Secretary of State (Central and Eastern Europe and Middle East), Lib.): Madam Chairman, I understand the position of the Canadian Alliance. It is not an unreasoned position, but it is not one that the government is taking.

Canada should commit itself to being part of the coalition to increase the magnitude of the force allied against Saddam Hussein and therefore increase the likelihood that he will comply with the UN issued request to disarm.

Is there some point where a massive build up of force would have the opposite effect, that it would say to Saddam Hussein that the decision has already been made to go? If Saddam Hussein was rational and thought the decision had already been made to intervene and that war was inevitable, would it have the opposite effect? If he had weapons of mass destruction, rather than give them up believing that the decision had already been made, would he keep them with the idea that he would use them in a war?

Mr. Leon Benoit: Madam Chairman, for me to try to read the mind of someone as unpredictable as Saddam Hussein is impossible. I simply cannot do that. I do know that the only thing Saddam Hussein has responded to in the past was a substantial show of force on his doorstep. That was the only thing he responded to.

In 1995, four short years after the end of the gulf war, he was amassing troops to invade Kuwait. What stopped him? He was stopped only by a large number of forces amassed on the border by the United States.

Last year, what caused Saddam Hussein to agree to open up to UN weapons inspectors? It was the amassing of a large number of troops on his doorstep by the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and a whole list of other countries. That type of show of force is the only hope we have to get through this without war.

How long can we wait to find out what he will do? In North Korea we waited too long. The policy of appeasement in 1994 and around that period in North Korea allowed that country to develop nuclear weapons. We face an extremely difficult situation with North Korea now. Had we not followed that policy of appeasement at that time, had we forced North Korea to comply, we would not be facing that type of nuclear threat today.

I do not want to wait for a similar type of situation to develop in Iraq. I certainly do not want Canadians, Americans, the British, or any other society, including the people of Iraq and area, to face those weapons of mass destruction.

• (2245)

Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Chairman, I would like to get this clear. The member said we waited too long with North Korea. Is he suggesting that we should have attacked North Korea or China or gone after Mugabe? Do we have a list of these tyrants who have potential weapons of mass destruction and do we systematically go after each and every one of them, or will we selectively choose one? I do not understand.

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Mr. Leon Benoit: Madam Chairman, I have heard that comment many times before. Each situation of course is quite different. Certainly the situation in North Korea is entirely different from the situation in Iraq from a couple of points of view.

It was only very recently that the western world discovered that North Korea was so far along in developing atomic weapons. There is still hope for a process of negotiation to be successful in North Korea. But a huge mistake was made in North Korea back in 1994 when that type of a country with that type of regime was given the ability to continue to develop nuclear weapons.

That situation would never have happened had there been a commitment on the part of many countries to take action if North Korea did not respect the agreements it signed not to develop nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, we followed a policy of appeasement and now we have an extremely difficult problem to deal with, but it is a different problem from the one we have in Iraq.

Hon. Gar Knutson: Madam Chairman, the hon. member made reference to a policy of appeasement and surely to goodness I do not think anybody would suggest that anybody's policy on Iraq these days is one of appeasement. There are UN inspectors there, they are on the ground, and they are doing their job.

My relatively narrow question to the member is, if Dr. Blix on February 14 delivers his report indicating that more time is needed to continue, what would the member's views be on the appropriateness of military intervention at that point?

Mr. Leon Benoit: Madam Chairman, that is a good and fair question. I think that what we have to again remember is that the onus was on Saddam Hussein, and still is, to turn these weapons of mass destruction over to UN inspectors.

We are now 15 resolutions down the road because no action has been taken. We have followed a policy of appeasement and that is why we are facing an extremely difficult situation. This situation would never have developed had nations gotten together and showed that they were serious about enforcing the UN resolutions.

Now, not only are we facing real prospect of war in Iraq, but we are facing a real prospect, and I think sadly, that the United Nations could lose its relevance in terms of a security body in the world.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Madam Chairman, the member suggested that there was still time in North Korea to resolve the challenges there. He did not say how, but I assume it would be diplomatically or through some intervention other than military. If the diplomatic measures fail, does the member anticipate a war with North Korea?

• (2250)

Mr. Leon Benoit: Madam Chairman, I do not anticipate a war in Iraq either. I am still hoping that a big enough show of force amassed on Saddam Hussein's doorstep will prevent war in Iraq, and that is what the debate is about tonight.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Chairman, I am encouraged with the position of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs for taking a firm stand on Iraq and for continuing to call for a multilateral solution to the crises. However, I would

encourage them to become more proactive in seeking a negotiated peaceful solution in Iraq.

Canada is committed to UN Security Council resolution 1441 and the disarmament of the Iraqi regime. Further, Canada and the international community are committed to ensuring global peace and security. However, given that there is no imminent threat to the Middle East or to the United States from Iraq, one must seek other rationale if the hunt for the axis of evil driving the call to war is the American determination to secure supremacy over the region. Or is this war about gaining control over the world's second largest oil reserves?

The premise for the U.S. call to war began as a need for regime change. Then the focus shifted to disarmament and the destruction of weapons of mass destruction. Once more the U.S. is suggesting regime change through a pre-emptive military action to topple Saddam Hussein. Where is the necessity of self-defence?

Pre-emptive action in the absence of an imminent threat is illegal. The war against Iraq, which now seems inevitable, is not based on established facts, but on speculation; speculation about potential developments that may or may not occur; speculation on what Iraq may or may not do. Fear of what may happen is not a reason to go to war. The war rhetoric has now shifted from what may happen to the notion that America is under attack or that the world stability is at stake. This is an illusion.

First, military action in Iraq would not be a war of defence. An attack on Iraq would be pre-emptive on the basis of speculation. This has no precedence in international law.

Second, the tyranny of Saddam Hussein toward his own people cannot be a precursor for war. We must seek other options. The very nature of international society, and international laws and norms are at stake. It is the process that is important and it is being threatened by a pre-emptive war by the United States.

Let me declare that Iraq cannot be bombed into democracy. Democracies are not instilled, rather, they develop over decades, as they did in the west.

The United States has made its intentions clear. If there is a conflict they will take control of Iraq as custodians. Canada and Canadians are not interested in a new form of colonialism. We do not want to return to a time of imperial rule, when kings are installed and regimes are changed at whim.

Canada's role is and always has been to provide the environment for democratic development. As Canadians our hope is that democracy will flourish in Iraq. This will not occur as a result of a bombing campaign.

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Iraq is a country sharply divided. There is no viable political alternative in sight and internal opposition has been fiercely crushed. Iraq is also a crippled nation. The efforts to regime change Saddam Hussein through sanctions and the last war have cost a million Iraqi lives. Iraqi civilians, infrastructure, including roads, bridges and railroads are shattered. Water purification systems, sewage treatment, electricity grids, and the oil industry have been battered. Water and soil are contaminated with depleted uranium from the gulf war. A once independent civilian economy has been destroyed.

A war on Iraq would cause further suffering to the Iraqi people. A military invasion could lead to as many as 500,000 dead and 900,000 refugees who will require food and shelter. Hospitals in Iraq cannot accommodate any more wounded. This is a truly grave humanitarian crisis.

● (2255)

I have witnessed the destruction of Iraq at first hand. Some have been critical of my recent trip to Iraq. I would like to clarify that my opposition to this war must not be seen as a defence of the Iraqi regime. I am fully aware of the ruthless acts of inhumanity perpetrated by this totalitarian regime. I understand the historical context: the Iran-Iraq war, the chemical attacks on the Kurdish people, and the invasion of Kuwait. Mine is not a defence of the regime. My sympathies lie with the Iraqi people who continue to bear the human impact of the UN sanctions. One million people have been killed, nearly 60% of them children, as a result of the sanctions. UNICEF estimates that 5,000 to 6,000 children die every month in Iraq. This is unacceptable and that is why the UN world food program director in Iraq and the UN humanitarian coordinator resigned in February 2000. This is also the reason that Mr. Halliday, the former UN humanitarian coordinator in Iraq, resigned in 1998: to protest against the sanctions. I have said this before and I will say it again. A war in Iraq would be an unprovoked war against children.

The thousands of letters I have received from Canadians, from Whitehorse to Nova Scotia, reflect these views. Social movements, human rights organizations and civil society organizations are united in their opposition to this war. Canadians have made it clear they do not want a war on Iraq.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs has said, Canada seeks a peaceful solution to the Iraq crisis. Canada must continue to work through the United Nations for a peaceful resolution. We must stand with the world community to oppose this war. We must stop this rhetoric about war and begin meaningful talks for peace.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, I do not doubt the hon. member's concern about this issue, but I must, on behalf of many Canadians, doubt her sound judgment, both in her remarks this evening and in her very unfortunate recent trip to Baghdad, where she met with apparently senior officials in one of the most tyrannical regimes in the world. That is not my partisan view. It is the position taken by every human rights organization in the world that has condemned the Saddam Hussein regime as one of the most tyrannical.

This member really does not understand. Perhaps she should have listened to her hon. colleague, the member for Ottawa—Nepean, who quoted Winston Churchill on the kind of moral confusion created by appeasers.

She was quoted from Iraq speaking positively about assurances she had been given by senior government officials in Iraq that the regime would clean up its human rights record and review its laws and its frequent resort to capital punishment. I wonder if she could tell us, did she raise the cases of women being beheaded in public squares in Iraq recently for unproven charges of prostitution? Did she raise the systemic abuse of women and children who are related to dissidents? Did she raise the cases of children who were tortured in front of their parents by the Iraqi secret police in order to extract information? Did she raise any of these questions?

Further, the hon. member says that she is terribly concerned about international law and is opposed to any pre-emptive action. Is she not aware that in this conflict the violator of international law is the Iraqi regime? Is she not aware when she speaks of pre-emptive strikes that in fact the military action being contemplated to enforce resolution 1441 and 15 predecessor UN Security Council resolutions in fact would be a continuation of the hostilities suspended by the instrument of a ceasefire in 1991, to which the Iraqi government was a party and in which it committed to a total disarmament under UN supervision? In other words, does she not understand that, legally speaking, the gulf war of 1990 is not over? There is no peace treaty. There is a ceasefire. It was Saddam Hussein who started that conflict. Is she not aware that this tyrant is in violation of every human rights covenant under the aegis of international law of 16 United Nations Security Council resolutions? How can she possibly suggest that responsible democratic allies of Canada are violating international law when in fact it is international law that they are seeking to impose? If she is so concerned about international law, why does she not support efforts to enforce UN Security Council resolution 1441?

Finally, if she is opposed to sanctions and opposed to the use of force to ensure compliance with the resolutions, what then does she propose, more peace missions to talk to Saddam Hussein's minions in Baghdad? Is that how she suggests the Iraqi regime will suddenly come to terms with international law?

● (2300)

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: Madam Chairman, I do not think that the condescending tone of the numerous questions were lost on anybody in the House.

However, since there were so many questions, perhaps I will deal with one issue: the issue of my mission in Baghdad, or my trip, or whatever the hon. member wants to call it.

I have heard the criticisms. In fact, I think I have been called Hanoi Jane.

An hon. member: Baghdad Beaumier.

Government Orders

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: Baghdad Beaumier, Hanoi Jane, and I know the hon. member is young and he can remember only little bits of history, however, if we recall, Hanoi Jane was absolutely right: Both the United States government and the leader of the war in Vietnam have acknowledged that the war was wrong, and Canada did not participate in that war.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Chairman, I would like to seek a clarification from the hon. member as to her position. She said categorically: no war on the people of Iraq. She has spoken eloquently of the impact economic sanctions already have had on the people of Iraq. She, like I, has been in a hospital in Baghdad and has seen the emaciated children and so on. She knows that there would be hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi people dying. Whether or not Saddam Hussein would be a victim of this, one does not know. There was a war in Afghanistan and Osama bin Laden is still at large. No one knows where he is. We know that one of the untold horrors of that war in Afghanistan was the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians. No one talks about those people, as if somehow their lives are not as valuable.

My question for the member from Mississauga is about what her position is with respect to the possibility that there may be a UN resolution supporting military action. We recall what happened in the gulf war. I remember it very well. There were two countries that voted against that war in 1991. One was Cuba. The other was Yemen, on the Security Council. I remember very well that the U.S. ambassador turned to the Yemeni ambassador and said, "That will be the most expensive vote you have ever cast". The next day the United States cut every penny of the \$72 million in aid to Yemen.

The ambassador of Mauritius, another country that sits now on the Security Council, had the audacity to actually question the possibility of a military strike on the people of Iraq. He was recalled by his government, which told him that if he did not shut up the United States would cut off the country's aid.

That is the kind of pressure and intimidation that we see in the Security Council. If that is successful and if the Security Council supports a resolution, my party, I am very proud to say, and our leader Jack Layton, have said that we will not support that war, that Canada should play a different role.

What is the position of the hon. member in those circumstances? Does she stand with thousands and thousands of her constituents in saying no war on the people of Iraq or does she support the position of the member from London earlier who said yes, that in that case it would be no vote, no vote, off we go to war?

• (2305)

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: Madam Chairman, I thank the hon. member for his question, I think. I believe he is trying to line up the sides here.

However, we went to Kosovo based on the "fact" that there were mass graves. That turned out not to be true. Unless we can show conclusively that not only does Saddam Hussein have weapons of mass destruction but is about to use them or is in the process of attacking another sovereign nation, my vote is no.

Mr. Jason Kenney: Madam Chairman, I just want to commend my colleagues from the NDP for the virtue of consistency, because at least its leader is being consistent with the position of its leader in

1939 when he voted against the invocation of war against Germany, as the CCF.

I will narrow it down and ask my friend one very clear question. If she is opposed to the United Nations sanctions regime in Iraq, if she wants the sanctions lifted, and if she is opposed to any hypothetical use of force even if sanctioned by the United Nations, what then does she propose as a means for the international community to compel the Iraqi regime to respect its obligations and the international law which she holds in such high regard?

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: Madam Chairman, we are talking about suppositions. I would like the member to show me without a doubt that Saddam Hussein has these weapons of mass destruction to which he continues to refer.

Not only do I oppose the economic sanctions against Iraq, an all party parliamentary standing committee on foreign affairs, including members of the Alliance Party, voted unanimously for the de-linking of sanctions against Iraq.

What do I propose to do? I think we need to continue to monitor Iraq. We need to help the people re-establish their society and empower the people to overthrow the regime from within. Change has to come from within, not from the outside forces, or it will not last.

Mr. Svend Robinson: Madam Chairman, does the hon. member agree there should be a vote in the House before Canadian Forces are sent off to war?

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: Madam Chairman, yes I do.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Chairman, it is with a sense of futility, despair, anger and anguish that I participate in the debate this evening. I am very pleased to be able to follow the course of the debate and, in particular, to follow the eloquent remarks of my colleague, the member for Halifax and our spokesperson on the Middle East, who spoke earlier this evening on behalf of my New Democrat colleagues.

Why is it that I say futility, anger and despair? Fundamentally, it is for two reasons. First, because I have to ask where these debates lead. I have participated in many of these take note debates over the years. I find it absolutely unbelievable that we cannot persuade the government that it has an obligation to the people that it says it represents, to allow those people to exercise their right to cast a vote on this most fundamental question of whether or not men and women will go off to war.

I have asked now three or four Liberal members of Parliament and have received three or four different answers as to whether or not there should be a vote on this issue.

I want to be very clear, on behalf of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, that we demand that rather than this charade of a take note debate that we be allowed to speak out and to vote on behalf of the people we have the honour of representing in this debate.

Government Orders

I remember in 1990 and 1991 when the Liberals were in opposition and Lloyd Axworthy was the foreign affairs spokesperson at the time. I remember working with Lloyd Axworthy hand in hand demanding that the Conservatives allow a vote. Indeed, to their credit, they did. We had that vote then. What has changed since the Liberals were in opposition in 1990?

The other point I have to note, and this point was made eloquently by our newly elected leader, Jack Layton, is that it is tragic to witness that effectively we have no real choice between the position of the official opposition and the government on this basic and fundamental issue. He made that point. If we need any evidence of that, here is what the Leader of the Opposition had to say, the so-called opposition on this issue. He said yesterday:

We should not rule out any options. The Prime Minister's position today seems to be exactly our position.

So much for opposition. They are in bed together. What an unholy alliance between the Liberals and the Canadian Alliance.

I feel a sense of futility in this debate because where does it ultimately lead? We know the government will ignore the voices of elected representatives and ignore the growing voices of people from coast to coast to coast in Canada who are speaking out against war.

Last month it was remarkable that in cities and communities across this land, including, for the first time, in Iqaluit, Canadians, young and old, students, trade unionists, peace activists, raging grannies, academics, ordinary citizens, mothers, fathers concerned about the future of this planet, were speaking out against war.

Although I must say I regret this fact, I am very proud of the fact that we as New Democrats stand alone in saying to our government, no to any war in Iraq.

As my colleague, the member for Halifax, said eloquently earlier, drop the sanctions, do not drop the bombs. That is our position.

● (2310)

I say that I approach this with a sense of futility as well because of how sad it was to watch George Bush speaking last night with the rabid applause of members from both sides of the house. What a pathetic spectacle, particularly for those of us who recall that the democrats in the last war in the gulf put up a strong and eloquent resistance. The American people though are speaking out on this issue.

However as I watched George Bush I felt a sense of horror and foreboding because it was crystal clear that George Bush was absolutely determined to wage war on the people of Iraq with or without the United Nations. He is dictating to the UN by saying, "We will come on February 5. We will show you our evidence. If you accept it, great, but if you do not, tough luck. We rule the world and we will put together a coalition of the will".

Let us hope that Canada, our government and our Prime Minister will have the courage to stand and represent the people of this country and say that we will not be part of any such coalition, that we stand for peace, for justice and not for war. Lest there be any doubt whatsoever about our position with respect to the regime of Saddam Hussein, we have denounced this. My colleague, the member for Halifax, denounced that regime on many occasions. I

might say that we have been far more consistent than the United States and many others.

I will never forget 1988. I was in Geneva at the United Nations commission on human rights shortly after Saddam Hussein had gassed the Kurds in Halabja. However, guess what? The silence of the United States and of Canada was shamefully deafening at that time. Where were they then? Who was it that supplied the precursors of the biological and chemical weapons to Saddam Hussein in the 1980s? I think it was the same people who were supporting Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan around the same time. The hypocrisy is absolutely unbelievable.

Bush is prepared to go to war. He does not care about the United Nations nor about our position in Canada. He has Tony Blair supporting him and Australia, apparently, but, for God's sake, why can our government not stand up? What happened to the tradition of that party at one point, the Pearson tradition that led to a well deserved Nobel prize? Shamefully, once again, it is gone.

The tragedy of the Iraqi people is that they already have suffered so terribly from economic sanctions that have been clearly documented by Denis Halliday, Hans von Sponeck and others. We in the New Democratic Party have joined with Canadians in calling for the lifting of those economic sanctions. What better way to release the people of Iraq from the pain, the suffering, the hunger and the humiliation to which they are now subjected than to give them the tools, hopefully, to restore democracy and human rights, and to rebuild their shattered lives and the infrastructure?

Lest anyone asks whether we have spoken out on this, indeed we have. I was in Baghdad in May participating in a conference with Tariq Aziz sitting just a few feet away. I, at that conference, speaking on behalf of my colleagues, accused his regime of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and said that he must be brought to justice. That is our position, but we also say that there must not be a war and that even if the Security Council is bullied or bribed into supporting a war, Canada has an option. It has the option of working for peace, of helping to rebuild after another devastating war. I cannot even imagine it.

They are going to use depleted uranium once again. We have seen the impact of that already. I have seen the children in Basra who were born with terrible congenital deformities.

● (2315)

In closing, I want to once again, on behalf of my colleagues, say that we stand in solidarity with the people of this country. We hope there will be hundreds of thousands of Canadians from coast to coast to coast joining with us on February 15, the next demonstrations, with our leader, Jack Layton, and with every member of our caucus.

[*Translation*]

We will be everywhere in Canada, Quebec and all the regions to say no to war and yes to peace.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, the member and I disagree on a lot of simple points of fact but I do not suppose we can resolve them here. However let me ask him about the theoretical basis for his objection to apparently any form of military action to force compliance of the various United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Is the member a pacifist? Does he believe that the use of military force is ever called for? I think this is an entirely legitimate question. This is not a *reductio ad absurdum*. The leader of the CCF in 1939 took what some characterized as a courageous position, while I would characterize it as morally bankrupt position, of saying that military force ought not to have been used against the Nazi regime.

I would like to know whether the member in particular and his party in general believe that military force can ever be justified and, if so, under what circumstances.

Mr. Svend Robinson: Madam Chairman, of course. In fact, one need only look at the tyranny of Hitler and the Nazis in World War II. I was not alive during that time, but I am very proud of the fact that, while the leader of the party at the time, J.S. Woodsworth, took a position of conscience as a pacifist, many others, including the elected representatives present in the House, strongly supported that fight against tyranny.

I am not a pacifist. I would point out that I was among those who called for the international community to intervene in Rwanda, and the world stood by. I was among those who called for the international community to intervene before the slaughter in East Timor, and the world stood by.

In answer to the hon. member's question, no, I am not a pacifist. However I have to ask, what would be achieved by a massive military assault on the hundreds of thousands of people in Iraq who have already suffered? Not only would it be a humanitarian and environmental disaster, it would be in flagrant violation of international law. International law simply does not allow for a pre-emptive strike to avoid the possibility that there might be some sort of an attack. Imagine the precedent that would set. India, Pakistan, Russia and Chechnya, who knows what else.

An hon. member: Israel.

Mr. Svend Robinson: Israel, absolutely.

When we talk about respect for UN resolutions, let us end the hypocrisy and recognize that if the United States were serious about respect for United Nations resolutions, it would be putting far more pressure on the Israeli government to finally end the illegal, dehumanizing, brutal occupation of Palestine and to allow the Palestinian people to have their state, living in peaceful co-existence with the state of Israel as well.

• (2320)

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Chairman, I just want to follow up on the UN resolutions which have been mentioned a number of times tonight. In fact, the member just mentioned a number of outstanding resolutions that are not enforced and how this weakens the credibility of the United Nations. I know the member is a strong supporter of the United Nations.

How do we solve this problem? Should the United Nations not have passed those resolutions? How would the member suggest they be enforced if he suggests they be enforced?

Mr. Svend Robinson: Madam Chairman, we strongly support resolution 1441, there is no question about that, just as we support resolutions 242, 338 and so many of the other resolutions that have been adopted, just as we support resolution 687, which, by the way, calls for regional disarmament in the Middle East and our ultimate objective of global eradication of all weapons of mass destruction.

We believe deeply in multilateral institutions. The tragedy here is that the United States, probably more than any other nation in the world today, is showing total contempt for multilateralism, whether it is on the international criminal court, landmines, Kyoto, the ABM treaty or biological weapons.

The United States is a country that uses the United Nations when it can but when the United Nations is not prepared to go its way, it says to hell with the United Nations. We say that approach is one that we are not prepared to accept, least of all when it will lead to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, I have to respond to the complete red herring about the alleged inconsistency of the application of UN resolutions. The member mentions 242 and 338 which impose obligations on all parties in the Middle East, not just on Israel, and which do not require the return of all the territories prior to the 1967 war. One could have a debate all night about that. It is disingenuous to draw a parallel between those resolutions and the explicit resolution 1441 about which there really is no debate of its intent.

The member is opposed to sanctions on Iraq. He wants to lift them. He is opposed to any use of force, even if authorized by the UN Security Council, to compel compliance. What then does he propose as a means to compel this dictator to comply with international obligations, with international law, and to prove disarmament? If not economic sanctions, if not military force—clearly diplomacy has not worked after 12 years—what does he concretely propose as an alternative?

• (2325)

Mr. Svend Robinson: Madam Chairman, I would take issue with the suggestion of the hon. member that somehow there has been no progress under the system of inspections by the United Nations. I do not know if the hon. member heard Mohamed ElBaradei, the chief inspector for the International Atomic Energy Agency, who said that there is no evidence whatsoever of any nuclear weapons in Iraq. That was a success story because quite clearly, and I accept what the member was saying, there was some evidence that there were some preparations being made there. The inspections worked.

According to Scott Ritter, the former chief weapons inspector of the United Nations, inspections worked significantly as well in the area of chemical and biological weapons. Let us not forget one of the reasons that inspections ultimately broke down was because the United States, through the CIA, was using the inspectors for illegitimate purposes. I think the hon. member is aware of that as well. Rolf Ekeus, who was the very respected Swedish head of the inspection program, has recently documented that as well.

We must listen to Blix and ElBaradei who have said they need more time to do their work properly.

Why the rush to war? And ultimately, if there were a war, if people were killed, what would be next? What would it mean, ultimately, for the stability of that region? And finally, what on earth does this particular regime have to do with the fight against terrorism? Bush last night was alleging there was some link between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, which shows that there is not the slightest comprehension of the nature of al-Qaeda.

We in the New Democratic Party, our leader Jack Layton, our caucus, and members at our convention last weekend, once again join with Canadians across this land in saying, “no to war, non à la guerre”.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Madam Chairman, I have one very brief question. Is it not true that there was more dismantling and destruction of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq as a result of the weapons inspection process from 1992 to 1999 than there was in the entire gulf war?

Mr. Svend Robinson: Madam Chairman, the short answer is, absolutely, that observation is accurate. The system was working effectively. In 1998 the inspectors were forced to withdraw because of a threat to bomb, which ultimately was carried out, not, by the way, under the auspices of the United Nations and, I regret to say, with the full support of the Liberal government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, Lib.): Madam Chairman, this debate on Iraq is generating a great deal of passion and interest. The stakes are high. There is a serious possibility that the United States, and whatever allies they can bring on board if they cannot get the UN Security Council's approval, will unilaterally declare war on Iraq.

Like many of my colleagues, I have received hundreds of messages and calls on this issue from people in my riding. I would like to thank and congratulate these people for taking the time to contact me on this issue. I will read a few of these documents.

I have here a letter from a woman by the name of Josée, whose family name I will not mention:

I am writing to you as the member for my riding to voice my vigorous opposition to war against Iraq. I believe:

- (1) that the very principle of a preventive war is an aberration and is detrimental to the whole world and that negotiated solutions must always be favoured;
- (2) that there is no evidence that this war would prevent anything whatsoever and that it might instead poison already bad relations between that region and the western world;
- (3) that this war will first and foremost serve the political and economic interests of the United States;

Consequently, I think that our government has a duty to take a clear stand against this war and to bring all the pressure necessary to bear at the international level to avert it.

I do hope the Canadian government will remember that it must represent the Canada population, which is against this war.

I would like to read a second message that comes from a person who lives on Jumonville Street and whose name is Amélie:

You know better than anyone that the United States is preparing to launch an attack against Iraq. This intervention will have a serious impact on the people of Iraq—

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According to the United Nations, between 142,000 and 206,000 people died in the gulf war. Since 1991, the embargo on Iraq has led to the death of more than 500,000 children—

Furthermore, the United Nations estimates that 23 million people will need food aid for more than one year after a military intervention—

You have a responsibility to find non-violent solutions to this conflict. What will you do to show that you oppose the war and violence? Will you be an example for my child and for future generations?

Her position can be boiled down to four points:

- No to Canada's participation in the war, even with a Security Council resolution.
- Yes to a free vote in Canada's Parliament.
- No to the United States' war effort.
- Yes to the end of sanctions that are killing the Iraqi population.

I have another letter from a couple, Denis and Sylvie, who live on Vendéens Avenue, in Anjou:

As Canadian citizens and residents of Anjou, we staunchly oppose Canada's participation in a war against Iraq. As our riding's representative, we ask that you pressure Parliament to:

- (1) Clearly announce Canada's position in the event of a declaration of war by the United States against Iraq without a mandate from the UN—
- (2) Stop the increasingly automatic alignment of our policy with U.S. policy—
- (3) Freeze and even decrease the defence budget—

And the message continues.

I will not say that I agree one hundred percent with all of these requests, but I can say that I have not received one message saying the opposite. Of the hundreds of messages we received, none said that Canada should immediately ally itself with the United States, with or without the UN, and go to war against Iraq. None of the messages said that.

● (2330)

I must reflect this view, which is very widely shared, particularly by my constituents and by Quebeckers, and people from the Montreal area.

What also makes me want to take part in this evening's debate is the speech delivered by Mr. Bush yesterday evening, which followed the tabling, on Monday, of the inspection teams' report.

What struck me in Mr. Bush's speech is that the U.S. President spoke constantly of war, threats and the use of force. He advocated unilateral action and preventive strikes. He donned the mantle of patriotism. Last night, he even sounded like a preacher at the end of his speech. Let me read the closing paragraph of his speech.

[*English*]

Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world, it is God's gift to humanity.

We Americans have faith in ourselves, but not in ourselves alone. We do not know—we do not claim to know all the ways of Providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life, and all of history.

May He guide us now. And may God continue to bless the United States of America.

● (2335)

[*Translation*]

I think they have to be very conceited to think of themselves as God's representatives and chosen ones on earth, being responsible, as Heaven's intermediaries, for bringing freedom to the poor ignorants who do not have the good fortune to be living in the United States.

Government Orders

Mr. Bush and the American Republicans do not have much legitimacy to act as international referees and vigilantes. After barely managing to get elected in their own country two years ago, they have not been very successful from an economic point of view and in the area of rights, on the contrary. Moreover, they are ringing up a deficit.

What gives them the right to tell the world what to do? Mr. Bush did not even get half of the votes of half of the U.S. voters. Reminding our friends south of the border that they should do their democratic homework at home before claiming to be the agents of democracy in the world is not being anti-American. The Bush administration did not get any mandate from a majority of Americans, the UN, or Canadians to wage war against anyone.

The option before us as Canadians is to work for peace within the UN framework—making use of the timeframes involved, as it seems there may be a few weeks of inspection left—to suggest approaches along the lines of international cooperation. There are other kinds of inspections that might be contemplated, if the others get nowhere.

It is, however, up to the Security Council to decide. In my opinion, there should be another debate within a few weeks and another resolution should be adopted and examined by all member states, all member states on the Security Council and all parliaments, including ours. Then we shall see what the best approach is.

I think that if we can move away from what we heard in last night's speech, which leads straight to war unilaterally, we could look at other approaches, such as stepping up cooperative programs and measures promoting dialogue with a number of countries. I feel that Canada has a good international reputation and it would be in all our best interests to work toward this.

Moreover, here in this country, in the United States, and in Europe and everywhere else in the world, we have many allies who would support us and stand by us if we took that direction, for it is the path of dignity and responsibility, and we would retain the confidence of the Canadian people.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, tonight we have been treated to a strange spectacle. We are here to discuss the possibility of a war against Iraq and Saddam Hussein, and have just heard an attack against the President of the United States. Perhaps the hon. member does not agree with UN resolution 1441.

Does he agree with the very clear resolution, which makes a show of strength against Saddam Hussein possible if he does not accept the resolution? Does he agree with the resolution?

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau: Madam Chairman, we are working within the framework of the UN and of the Security Council resolution. That is what I explained at the beginning. I am happy that the Prime Minister of Canada, through his dialogue with the President of the United States in September, contributed with other leaders to convincing Mr. Bush to let the Security Council deal with the situation.

At the time, there appeared to be a very real possibility that the U.S. would move alone to solve the so-called Iraqi problem. The Americans accepted to go through the UN. Resolution 1441 was adopted, but the process does not end there. The Security Council

remains seized of the matter. Inspections have been carried out. There has been a report stating that the work is in progress. As regards nuclear weapons, a monitoring system has now been set up throughout Iraq, based on Monday's report.

As for chemical and biological weapons, there have been hundreds of inspections in hundreds of sites. There is work to be done. Iraq has been asked to continue to cooperate and to improve its cooperation. We need time. The Secretary General of the UN has asked for more time. I think that this is only reasonable.

As well, we might give some thought, when other reports are tabled in a few weeks, to beefing up the inspection system, by sending multinational military contingents along with the inspectors. Suggestions that have been made by people in positions who had observed many such conflict situations. The inspections could be backed up with more muscle before moving on to the thought of war.

When a decision is made to go to war, whether by the Security Council or by our American neighbours, we cannot know what all the consequences of this decision will be. It is all very fine to say that the bombing raids will be televised and so on, but will this change the situation in the slightest? What happened in Afghanistan? Did bombing Afghanistan change the mind of a single Taliban? Many people certainly lost their lives, but no change was made in the situation.

I do not think this is the way to go in Iraq either, believing that this kind of problem can be settled with bombs. Bombs do not change anyone's mindset, all they do is cause damage and widen the gaps between peoples, nations and civilizations. There are other ways of achieving concrete results, but using peaceable means for as long as possible.

● (2340)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Madam Chairman, I want to congratulate the hon. member on his speech. It was a well-informed, very intelligent and very progressive speech.

I would like him to tell me if he would agree to call a vote in the House of Commons to determine whether the hon. members are for or against entering into war against Iraq.

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau: Madam Chairman, this question is often raised. Opinions vary within the various parties. Personally, I think it is important enough to warrant a vote being taken in this place.

The Constitution is said to provide that the government may make decisions on this matter, which does not mean it does not have the right and responsibility to check how the members of this House feel about it, through a vote. I think it would be interesting to go that far. Each member could vote according to his convictions and reflect the mandate they were given by their constituents. We get to vote on much less important issues. Several times each week, we vote on issues whose importance is questionable.

Government Orders

We are considering entering into war and getting our country involved in a war. We are talking about the lives of people in the war zone and Canadian troops. We are talking about enormous expenditures, to the tune of billions of dollars maybe. And we would get involved without seeking the advice of parliamentarians through a vote? I think there is very broad support in several parties for a vote on this issue.

• (2345)

[*English*]

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, I must say that I always find it particularly distressing when members of this place stand up, as the member did, on a motion regarding the repeated failure of one of the most tyrannical regimes in the world to comply with the requirements of the international community.

The very United Nations which he applauds, Iraq has failed to comply with its resolutions. Yet he spends most of his time attacking the moral legitimacy of the United States, its head of state and says the United States is engaged in “unilateralist warmongering”.

To hear that when he is a member of a government and a citizen of a country which benefits and has for decades benefited effectively from the United States defending our sovereignty in terms of its military. We have been able to get away with the lowest defence expenditure in NATO because the United States has been prepared to defend the North American continent, and he has the temerity to get on his moral high horse and criticize the United States for, among other things, liberating the people of Afghanistan.

An hon. member: Oh, please.

Mr. Jason Kenney: That is very interesting. I see one of the members from Mississauga shaking her head in disgust. Perhaps she did not see the scenes of people in Kabul greeting the soldiers who entered that city to liberate them from the Taliban regime.

I feel as if I am sitting in some sort of Noam Chomsky conspiracy theory teach-in here with people who do not live in the real world.

He says that we did not change the minds of the Taliban. What we did was to change the people in power and begin a nascent democracy in a country which desperately needs it.

An hon. member: Who believes that?

Mr. Jason Kenney: Perhaps he could speak to the representatives of the government of Hamid Karzai who are trying their best to create a nascent democracy with the support of countries like Canada and the United States.

The member says his alternative is programs of co-operation and measures to promote dialogue as a solution to the problem in Iraq. My question is, is that a joke? Does he expect to change the mind of a tyrant through measures to promote dialogue and programs of co-operation? If he is opposed to sanctions and opposed to force, does he really believe that Saddam Hussein will comply with 16 UN Security Council resolutions and a ceasefire obligation by Canada engaging him in programs of co-operation and measures to promote dialogue? What planet is he living on?

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: I know it is late but let us try to continue in the way we have been proceeding for the last few hours.

[*Translation*]

I will allow at least one answer from the hon. member.

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau: Madam Chairman, I will say to the hon. member who just asked that question that if people were less ignorant and less biased in our country, in the United States and in other countries, we could move a little closer to tolerance and understanding. If there were greater awareness in our country, in the United States and elsewhere, we could build lasting ties. Biases would disappear and dictators would not last as long.

As for human rights, we could also talk about them. There is a whole context. If we want to change certain things over time, we will not do it with bombs and wars. This only increases opposition, increases polarization and deepens resentment. There is enough of that as it is. Only by trying to work in another direction can we hope for a brighter future.

• (2350)

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Madam Chairman, it has certainly been an interesting evening. I must say that I have learned a lot from members and I have come a long way.

One of the members mentioned Israel and Palestine a second ago, which reminded me of an incident a couple of weeks ago. I was on the phone to a chap in Jerusalem, a man I know quite well who worked for the department of foreign affairs in Israel. We were talking about Iraq and whether it has weapons of mass destruction. I told him that we had had a committee meeting and there was no absolute evidence to convince me that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. I was meandering around with this conversation and the phone went silent. After a minute, he said that he supposed it was all right for me sitting in Canada to speculate about weapons of mass destruction, but he was going to be fitting his children with gas masks that afternoon. That really shook me and made me think about how serious this subject is. We in Canada are relatively distant and protected and safe, but many of the people who may be affected by what happens as a result of UN resolution 1441 are certainly in a different predicament.

This debate is certainly an interesting debate, but like many others, in fact almost all, what I have heard tonight is kind of pointless. We have shared our ideas and have tried to convince others of our points of view, but at the end of the day we will go home and this will not come to anything because there will be no vote. It makes the whole exercise relatively pointless other than letting us air our views, getting it off our chests and maybe trying to make some people understand our point of view. In the end it really does not go anywhere because there is no vote. I cannot think of any reason why there will not be a vote, but there will not be one. The debate will die and we will all go home and carry on tomorrow.

Government Orders

There are some common denominators from almost every speaker. I do not want to jump to conclusions, but I believe most speakers tonight have acknowledged that there is a dangerous regime in Iraq and it is very guilty of some awful offences. The regime in Iraq poses a threat to its neighbours and to other countries around the world, and the status quo is not acceptable. I think we all agree on that.

What we do not agree on is a path of action and the timing on how to deal with this issue, and those are the things I would like to talk about.

If we take the wrong path, we will pay an awful price in terms of human lives, destruction and casualties. I have read half a dozen different estimates of what the possible casualty list could look like, but one I saw today said that on the Iraqi side it could be between 1,000 and 50,000 soldiers. These are people. On the side of the allies it could be between 100 and 500 soldiers. This does not include civilian casualties and these days in a war as much as 80% of the casualties are civilians. The downside of this is absolutely incredible. We must make every possible effort we can to avoid a violent conflict.

I know that it is a serious situation, I know that the status quo is not acceptable and I know that we are dealing with a tough situation, but we cannot say we will not try this because we are fed up, time has run out, we will go to war, and 50,000 people may die. We have to do our job here and the United Nations has to do its job. The Americans have to do their job. All countries have to do their job because the downside is absolutely horrendous.

If there is a war in Iraq, we know what the outcome will be. Allies on the side of the United States will win the war. There is no question about that, but what will the price be on both sides? Whatever it is, it will be huge.

When this problem presented itself after years and years of failure, the United Nations dealt with it on November 8 by unanimously passing resolution 1441. The biggest part of resolution 1441 was the mandate to re-establish the weapons inspectors and put them to work under Dr. Hans Blix. Dr. Blix had no deadline for completing his work.

● (2355)

This is what puzzles me. I really do not understand how even after just a couple of weeks of Mr. Blix being in Iraq there was suddenly this talk: "We are getting awfully impatient. The time is up. He said lots of time. We have to move on now. There is no time. We are tired of waiting". I do not understand that. I do not understand why the resolution was passed in the United Nations unanimously, but the same people who voted in favour of re-establishing the weapons inspectors and giving them the mandate to do their jobs right away started to say that they were fed up and did not have time.

We have to give them time. They have only been at it for 60 days. My understanding is that they do not even have all the equipment they need to detect the weapons of mass destruction, be they nuclear, chemical or biological. The inspectors must be allowed to finish the mandate they were given by a unanimous resolution passed at the United Nations.

Not only will Iraq be a victim of a war if it carries on, but if we do not allow the weapons inspectors to do their jobs I think the other

victim will be the United Nations. We have heard about the shortcomings of the United Nations tonight. We have heard about its failures. There is no question about that, but if a unanimous motion of the United Nations is circumvented or sidestepped, it will be a very serious dilution of credibility for the United Nations and it will undermine any future effort that it attempts.

Dr. Blix has asked for more time to complete his mandate and I think it should be given to him, for sure. I see no reason why it should not be given to him. There is no question about the problem. There is no question about the challenge. There is no question about the threat that must be eliminated. There is no question that the first report that Iraq is not complying was very disappointing. Technically yes, but in spirit no, and it is just not good enough.

On the other hand, right now there is no imminent threat from Iraq for the United States or for any other country. The whole world is focused on Iraq. There is no threat. Again I say there is no reason not to let Hans Blix finish his job. In fact there is no reason why we should not all be trying to do everything we can to find a non-violent resolution. We should exhaust every possible alternative before we send our young people into war with the possible casualties that are predicted. When it comes to diplomacy versus violence or military action, we have to do our job. We have to do the very best we can.

There is a role for Canada. In this whole exercise we have been almost invisible around the world, but there is a role. We can demand of the United Nations, our allies and our partners that Hans Blix be given all the time he needs. Again, there is no reason not to give him time now. The system is working. The pressure is on. The inspectors are in and are able to go anywhere they want in an unfettered manner. Let us make sure they have that time. Canada can do that. Canada can lobby other countries. The Prime Minister can clearly state that we support resolution 1441 in every respect and that we insist the weapons inspectors be given the time to complete their jobs.

We should also insist that when Dr. Blix has done his report it should come back to the Security Council for a second resolution. The first resolution is not clear. It was designed to be unclear to allow it to go through and be ambiguous and I think that was a mistake. Nevertheless, that is what it is. The first resolution 1441 is ambiguous. Another thing Canada could do is have a vote in the House, but I do not think that is going to happen.

I want to remind everyone that if the war goes ahead it will not be confined to Iraq. I mentioned the man in Israel who was buying gas masks for his children. I believe that the war would destabilize all of the Middle East. It would spread hate and probably encourage more terrorism in the future instead of less. It will not be confined to just one small area.

Government Orders

There was a time when Canada did play a really respectable role in the world community. We were listened to. We were asked to be involved. We were invited to participate. Now we are invisible. In fact, when I watch the evening or morning news the positions are always recited, with Britain saying this today and Russia waffling on that, and France and Germany being here. The positions of those countries are stated clearly, but Canada is not mentioned. It is like we are invisible. Right now Prime Minister Blair is in the U.S. and is about to meet with President Bush. Meanwhile, our minister of defence goes to Washington and cannot find anyone to talk to.

I want to finish by saying there is no question that there is a very serious threat which must be dealt with. There is no question that UN resolution 1441, backed up by the threat of force, has convinced Saddam Hussein to open up and allow the process to start to work, but now we have to allow it to finish. Canada must stop being invisible. We owe it to our military and we owe it to all the people who will be involved in a terrible conflict if diplomacy fails.

• (2400)

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, I am not entirely clear about the member's position. To me it sounds very similar to the government's position, which is more time, not necessarily force. His leader said that Canada should not be involved in any military action if the United Nations Security Council does not approve of it.

When he says the system is working, I suppose by that he means that UN inspectors are actually operating in Iraq. Would he not agree with me that the system simply would not be working were it not for the credible threat of force posed principally by the United States and other allied democracies? If it is that credible threat of force which has compelled the Iraqi regime to come this far in terms of semi-cooperation, would he agree with me that Canada should, at least politically and perhaps militarily, contribute to that credible threat of force to ensure that, as he puts it, the system continues to work? Or does he believe that the Iraqi regime has just opened its doors to these inspectors out of the kindness of its heart and has suddenly changed a twelve year pattern of refusing to cooperate?

Mr. Bill Casey: Madam Chairman, the member was not listening, because I said several times that the only reason the system is working is the credible threat by the United States. I give it full marks for that.

However, the system is working now. We have received the first report, which was not a clean slate. It was not all negative but it was certainly not all positive. The system is working. Dr. Blix has come back with his first report and I think the system will continue to work under the threat of force. Again, it would not be working if the threat of force were not there, but it is working.

Rather than go to the next step and revert to a war that could kill thousands of people, why not let the system work a little longer? There is no reason not to let it work a little longer.

I think our position is very clear. Canada should not participate in a war without a second resolution at the United Nations. Hans Blix has to be allowed to go back to make his report to the United Nations, not to anybody else. Hans Blix has to decide whether there is a material breach. He has to outline what the deficiencies are. Then the United Nations should vote on it again, because resolution 1441

was meant to have a second vote. Serious consequences are not necessarily war.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Madam Chairman, my question is for my colleague in the Progressive Conservative Party. We keep hearing from the United States that it has additional evidence from its intelligence sources. We do not see it. Would the member agree with me that the logical thing to allow the inspectors to do the best possible job, the most effective job, would be for the Americans, if they have that information, to share it and share it immediately?

Mr. Bill Casey: Yes, Madam Chairman, I do think the United States should produce the evidence it has. It should be provided to the weapons inspectors and probably should have been provided to the weapons inspectors a long time ago.

To me the most credible of all the parties involved in this debate are the weapons inspectors. I have a lot of faith that Dr. Blix and his team will tell us the real facts. There are so many stories, so many motives floating around, so many suggestions, and so much intelligence. At our foreign affairs committee meeting, I asked very specifically what evidence our Department of Foreign Affairs had of weapons of mass destruction. The answer was that there was a preponderance of evidence left over from the last war and so on and so forth, but there really was not any that I could see and touch. I came away not at all convinced that there was any evidence of weapons of mass destruction here.

Again, I am putting my faith in the weapons inspectors. I think they are well qualified. They have the mandate to do it. All they need now is a little time in which to do it.

• (2405)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Madam Chairman, first I want to congratulate member for Cumberland—Colchester on his continuing efforts to bring some sanity and advance peace in the Middle East generally. I was very happy that he shared his story about the Israeli official, with whom he was speaking in the last couple of days, who acknowledged that he was in the process of buying gas masks for his children.

The question I want to raise with the member is this. He has been absolutely determined and dogged in his continuing efforts to keep dialogue open between Israeli and Palestinian politicians to try to get on with the peace building process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I wonder whether, in his communications with those in Israel and Palestine, he experienced the same level of horror as the peace seeking mission, which I just recently led to the same area, did? I encountered overwhelming and almost universally, in talking with Israelis and Palestinians in that recent mission and in Egypt and Jordan as well, people who were so very opposed to any decision by the U.S. to attack Iraq. This is despite the fact that Israel, for example, is probably the strongest partner on earth with the U.S. in relation to its military aggression occurring in Palestine on a regular basis.

Government Orders

Second, I am concerned that he is so resigned to the notion that there will not be a vote in the House. I have been here for most of the last five hours and the only voice I have heard, from the Liberals benches, who has said he does not favour a vote has been that of the foreign affairs minister. I believe the other members on the Liberal benches who have spoken on the issue has indicated their support for a vote to take place on it. What is the basis of the member's resignation to the notion that there cannot and will not be a vote?

Mr. Bill Casey: Madam Chairman, actually it is a strange thing. The conversation I had with the man in Jerusalem was a couple of weeks ago, but this morning I talked to Amir Mamon, who I am sure some here know. He was the counsellor at the Israeli embassy in Ottawa for a long time. I called him this morning to find out the results of the election in Israel. Some of our members have been involved in hopefully bringing members of parliament from the Knesset and the Palestinian legislature here and I was hoping they had been re-elected. They all were.

At that time he told me how his two boys were adjusting to life in Israel with the fear, the pressure and the cloud that they live under every day from the threat of any possible violence or whatever. They love it there because it is home but they are having a hard time adjusting to it.

Anytime talk to anyone there, they are fearful of the impact of a war in Iraq and what could happen in the region. It is so easy for us to say that we have to get rid of Saddam Hussein, we will have a quick war and it will be over with. However it will not be a quick war. It will be a terrible war. It will be a big war. It will be a broad war. It will affect the whole region. It will affect all Muslim countries. It will create terrorists and hate and we have to do everything we can to avoid it.

On the vote, I am sorry I did not understand the question. However I kept track of the speakers and I thought everyone said that they supported a vote except the foreign affairs minister. We have to ask ourselves why there would not be a vote on an issue like this. I do not know the answer.

• (2410)

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Madam Chairman, I am proud to speak on behalf of the vast majority of the residents of Mississauga Centre, to speak out against a call to war by the United States of America.

Canada is committed to partnerships such as NATO and the UN, partnerships that provide strength and security and some certainty in troubled times.

I am pleased that our Prime Minister, and our ministers of foreign affairs and defence, have reinforced Canada's commitment to no military action against Iraq that is not fully and unequivocally supported by a UN resolution.

Given the burning desire of President Bush to plunge into battle with Iraq, and only he knows the real reasons for his urgent desire, Canada must vehemently and continuously oppose this calamity. I cannot remember a time in the last 10 years when we have been faced with an issue more profound, urgent or more defining than this one. I also believe the issue has captured the deep concern of every Canadian, an often self-satisfied, complacent and friendly crowd.

This is a moment in time when Canadians must truly define themselves as a sovereign nation and must demonstrate themselves as a truly humane nation. We must not delude ourselves that Canada's refusal to participate will have much effect on President Bush's decision to go to war, a war he is champing at the bit to declare. However that refusal to participate without incontrovertible proof of imminent devastation stakes a moral ground for us. We are the world's de-miners, negotiators and peacekeepers, not the world's warmongers.

War is not some sort of colourful video game. Real people bleed, starve and die. There are devastating consequences to war, especially one in which a democratic country such as the United States is the aggressor. If Canada were to approve or to participate, we must be willing then to accept full responsibility for all the consequences with our heads held high. I, for one, cannot do this.

While considering a limited coalition with the Bush's and Blair's of this world, we must review the possible motives behind this attack and be prepared to defend those motives as just, reasonable and pressing. We must take responsibility for attacking a sovereign country, one of many whose leadership would not be of our choosing. Where would we stop while rearranging the pieces on a highly volatile Middle East chess board?

Is an insatiable need for oil a justification, or needed boost to a sluggish economy, or a required smokescreen for large corporate fraud and mismanagement a justification? Are we willing to participate in the creation of chaos in an already volatile region with a Pandora's Box of results which would be impossible to predict?

We cannot ignore the effect of a refusal to participate with a close neighbour and ally, a giant crouching just below are undefended border. We must be prepared for economic and other repercussions, willing to withstand inconvenience while we stand on our principles.

We also have to consider the long lasting humanitarian fallout of this war on the next generation of Iraqis. Physicians for Global Security tell us almost 50% of the population of Iraq is under 18 years of age. Are we prepared to go to war with children, children who have already suffered unimaginable abuse and deprivation at the hands of adults in whose care they have been entrusted?

Every bomb that drops will kill thousands of those children. Every shot that is fired will kill more of those children. Our real concern should be for those children who survive, the poor souls who will be orphaned, devastated and left to grow into deeper hatred of western democracy. They will be known as collateral damage, unavoidable flotsam and jetsam from the mighty tides of war. God only knows what they will harbour in their hearts as they watch their country overrun by their liberators.

What will happen to the refugees, a highly volatile tide of destitute persons forced from their homes? How do we justify drastically altering the course of millions of human lives?

We all acknowledge Iraq has an evil dictator who has tortured and killed his own people mercilessly, yet we have imposed brutal sanctions which have weakened the civilian population so they can never have the strength to rid themselves of the monster. Iraq has been repeatedly demolished. There is little infrastructure to support technology, education or hope of self-sufficiency. Yet we of the western world demand regime change.

Saddam Hussein is most dangerous to his own people and we consider a devastating attack on those people without full knowledge of any danger to ourselves, the only real justification for violence.

● (2415)

It is also certain that men and women in western armed forces will die, be injured or suffer devastating psychological damage from going to war. What is our responsibility to those men and women who willingly choose to defend our country? We must not send them to war without exhausting every possible alternative to the ultimate violence called war.

As a country we are committed to international law and to diplomatic solutions. We are peacemakers and peacekeepers. We must maintain our commitment to work within the United Nations mandate no matter what our neighbour demands. We must never jeopardize our reputation in the world, one established by Lester B. Pearson, one that makes us uniquely respected wherever I have travelled in the world. We are not at a point where we must sully that reputation, not quite yet.

The weapons inspectors have thus far not revealed weapons of sufficient magnitude to cause a serious threat to the security of the free world. The inspectors have asked for more time. We debate whether Iraq has complied fully with UN resolutions to allow inspectors to search every nook and cranny of its country. The answers are inconclusive and the inspectors have asked for more time.

Saddam Hussein has been a dormant threat for more than 12 years. What is the urgency? Why can the UN inspectors not be given more time? This war has been portrayed as another battle in the war on terrorism. It is irresponsible and grossly manipulative to use terrorism as justification for an unrelated enemy in an unrelated war. There has been no clear, strong evidence connecting Iraq and al-Qaeda. Where is the real culprit, Osama bin Laden, former operative of the CIA? There was no mention of him in the speech last night.

In fact no definitive evidence has yet been forwarded connecting the government of Iraq to terrorist organizations technically capable of a real attack on the United States of America. Iraq is a country with no navy and no air force, a country whose people have been devastated repeatedly by years of suppression and war. How can it pose a serious threat to the most powerful military complex in the world?

Some would lead us to war on the premise that if we do not attack first, a phenomenon unheard of, Saddam Hussein may wreak havoc on the world of a magnitude not experienced since World War II. This is a test of credulity and an insult to our collective intelligence. It is also an insult to the 13 million soldiers and 25 million civilians who died in that war to set the stage for the U.S. to become a superpower.

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By invading Iraq we declare that we do not value life, autonomy or the dignity of the Iraqi people. We risk creating enemies who will be driven even more passionately to harm America and its allies. Such terrorist attacks are becoming the real threat of the 21st century and it is a threat against which we cannot protect ourselves.

Terrorism is the by-product of deprivation and a mindset born and bred in discontent. It comes from starvation, devastation and the inability to dream of a better life.

Finally, I want to make it clear that opposition to a U.S.-British war on Iraq is not anti-American. It is an assertion of sovereignty. To dismiss Canadians who are opposed to this war as anti-American only serves to limit debate. A decision to take our country to war must be made without consideration of trade or proximity. It is above all a moral issue, not an economic one. It is one of ethics and world security, not of economics, politics and the thirst for oil. No consideration other than clear and incontrovertible evidence of imminent danger justifies taking our very tolerant, democratic and beautiful country to war.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, I would like to ask the member if she feels that there is no evidence of Iraqi possession of weapons of mass destruction, that there is no cause for potential conflict to enforce such resolutions? Why does she think it is that the United Nations Security Council has passed resolution 1441 and passed 15 other resolutions prior to it requiring proof of disarmament? Why does she think that Chief Inspector Blix yesterday reported that the Iraqi government still does not seem to be understanding its obligations to comply?

She seems to believe that there is no threat, imminent or remote; no real proof; that this is all the designs of some grand American corporate conspiracy with a little bit of world money here and American imperialism there; all the hoary old conspiracy theories of the paranoid left.

Could she then explain what it is that provoked Syria to vote in favour of resolution 1441 if it believed that there was no possession of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq? Why did the United Nations seize itself of this matter last November if there was no problem, if there was no threat, and if there were no weapons?

Perhaps she can explain to us, since she seems to be omniscient about this, what happened to the 6,500 chemical bombs that were in the Iraqi arsenal 10 years ago but have suddenly disappeared? What happened to the VX gas that has suddenly disappeared and was not recorded in the submission Iraq made to the weapons inspectors? What happened to the other biologicals that were part of the Iraqi declarations a decade ago which have apparently disappeared and of which there is no evidence of their destruction, and scientists cannot verify their whereabouts?

Government Orders

Could she explain to us what she means when she says there is no imminent threat? What does she define as imminent? Is the problem not with rogue nations? Does she not understand the problem is that imminent is too late. By the time a scud missile with biologicals lands on Tel Aviv it is too late for tens of thousands of people. By the time a vial of VX gas is given to a member of an al-Qaeda network and ends up in a western city subway system it is too late. Does she not understand that to destroy the weapons is to prevent the imminent threat? Does she not understand that because apparently the UN Security Council does?

• (2420)

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish: Madam Chairman, the only thing that is imminent is my loss of patience due to the hour and my senior years. I am unaccustomed to being treated like this by someone half my age, but out of respect for the House I will answer the question.

I never said there was no danger. I never said there was not good reason to go in there. In fact, I agree with the hon. member's position that the threat of violence has battered Saddam Hussein right down, which has been a good thing. No one has said that he is not dangerous. He is more dangerous to his own people than he is to the mighty United States of America. In my opinion it would take flocks of carrier pigeons to lift one of those missiles and get it on target, because he does not have the capability.

We have a trusted UN force there which says it is not finished looking, not finished checking, and not finished making sure that there is not enough imminent danger. I am absolutely in agreement with what the inspectors are doing. I am absolutely in agreement with Mr. Bush leaping on television whenever he feels like it and making wild threatening gestures, although it is really scaring me. However I do not think it is time for this country to send our own forces over there to be killed.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Madam Chairman, given the significance my colleague across the way places on the role Canada should be playing, can she agree with me that this is of such paramount importance, as a political policy issue for this country, that there should be a vote in the House before a decision is made as to whether or not we will declare war on Iraq?

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish: Madam Chairman, not that we are supposed to talk about what goes on in caucus, but I did ask the Prime Minister this morning that if we were having a take note debate, and I understand his jurisdiction is in fact over calling war or not calling war, could we not have a take note vote to follow up the take note debate?

I am sure that if we get to that point there are many in our caucus who feel that way, but I would like to be on record as being much in favour of a take note vote and would feel that our government and our Prime Minister should trust 301 members in the House to be able to stand in their place on behalf of their constituents and be seen to be voting for or against something this serious.

Kyoto is an international treaty and according to the British parliamentary system we did not have to have a vote on that, but we did. This is no less important to my constituents than the Kyoto accord so I am 100%, unequivocally, for a vote.

• (2425)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Madam Chairman, I would like to congratulate the member on her excellent speech tonight and take the opportunity at the same time to congratulate her on having shown the courage of her conviction in speaking out when few others were prepared to do so about the absolute necessity of there being a vote in the House of Commons.

The member has spoken passionately and knowledgeably about the impact of the brutal sanctions which have crippled the Iraqi people and resulted in the deaths of literally hundreds of thousands of children, estimated to be 500,000 children.

The member will know that the foreign affairs committee, I believe unanimously, voted to call for the end of those economic sanctions. That committee of course was chaired by the now foreign affairs minister. The member sits on the Liberal side of the House, although I do wonder from time to time why because certainly her colleagues do not seem to have the same courage of conviction that she has shown on so many occasions, although tonight I must say more and more have. I want to be fair here.

Could the member help those of us who are struggling to understand how the foreign affairs committee could have voted to end sanctions at an earlier date, but has fallen silent, and I guess under the situation now having the foreign affairs minister who previously chaired the foreign affairs committee, becoming more and more under the spell of George Bush? How is it that this foreign affairs minister is no longer prepared to stand up for an end to the brutal economic sanctions that are crippling the Iraqi people?

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish: Madam Chairman, first I would like to stand firmly in my place again and suggest that I am a true blue Liberal. That means I am slightly to the right economically and very much to the left in social policy. I am very comfortable on this side of the House unless and until a war is declared without UN sanctions, and then I may be sitting in one of those independent seats over there.

As far as the Minister of Foreign Affairs is concerned, he is in my opinion someone I respect most deeply. He is a wonderful person and he sincerely put that recommendation forward to that committee and allowed its members the freedom to vote unanimously to make that recommendation.

Something very strange happens when one enters cabinet. Some people say "they suck the brain out of your left ear", but I do not believe that. What happens is we have to work as part of a different team and are under different restrictions. However, there is nobody in the House I would rather have in that position than the member for Toronto Centre—Rosedale because he is an incredibly fine man. He understands the situation very well and he is going to work toward doing the right thing.

I would also like to thank the Canadian Alliance because it has put forward one of my favourite pet peeves which is empowering committees. The little insurrection before Christmas, which I assisted on, where we made committee chairs elected by the group on secret ballot, was just a step in the direction of trying to empower these committees. They are not just there to debate and then go off and make resolutions that everybody ignores. More and more, we must empower those committees to actually make a recommendation that will be listened to. I thank the member for her compliments.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, it gives me I guess mixed reactions to rise to speak to this very important topic. As a Muslim, my heart goes out to a lot of the Middle Eastern countries where there is constant turmoil and hardship faced by many of the residents. Obviously sharing a similar religion and knowing the importance of what Islam teaches when it comes to peace, tolerance and goodwill, and not seeing that, especially on the part of radical dictators is always something that brings a lot of sadness to myself and, I know, my community and many other Muslims around the world.

However, at the same time, my family fled a radical regime dictator, Idi Amin from Uganda, and were lucky to come to Canada. I know and my family knows the value of countries like Canada, the U.S., the U.K. and others that stand up against radical dictators around the world, people who do not respect human rights and who do not value democracy. Obviously we have been fortunate enough to come to a country that values those things.

Today we are debating on whether or not we should continue in that vein and try to help people around the world who are facing similar hardships that my family one time faced before we were able to come to Canada.

Resolution 1441, passed by the UN Security Council last November, called upon Saddam Hussein and the government of Iraq to commit to disarmament and to cooperate with the United Nations weapons inspectors. Unfortunately this did not happen.

I will attempt to outline several areas where Saddam Hussein has refused to abide by the terms of resolution 1441 and what Canada needs to do as a nation to secure peace in the Middle East. It will not be easy.

Saddam has had a history of non-compliance. Prior to the 1991 gulf war Saddam Hussein ordered the use of chemical agents against Iran during the 10 year conflict and against the Kurdish people in the north. Over 1.5 million people died during the Iran-Iraq conflict.

The invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was illegal under international law. Atrocities and crimes committed by Iraq during its occupation have been well documented: murder, rape, torture, pillaging of Kuwaiti households and national treasures, and the destruction of Kuwaiti oil wells that led to massive environmental catastrophes.

During the gulf war Saddam's scuds attacked Israel, a non-combatant, showing his willingness to attack states without any provocation.

Following the gulf war, as part of the ceasefire signed by Iraq and subsequent UN resolutions, Iraq agreed to disarm and to allow UN weapons inspectors to destroy some of these chemical weapons.

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However, in 1998, as we know, many of these weapons inspectors left because of Iraqi non-compliance with these UN resolutions.

There have been efforts to try to help the people of Iraq. The oil for food program established to allow the Iraqi citizens to avoid the brunt of Saddam's actions has been circumvented by the Iraqi regime.

Now, we move on to the non-compliance of resolution 1441. Recently, Chief Inspector Blix reported to the UN Security Council on January 27 breaches by Iraq, thereby failing to fulfill its obligations under resolution 1441.

Iraq was obligated to declare all of the chemical weapons and devices, but in fact it has not. The 12,000 plus page report had glaring omissions, especially with regard to nerve gas, anthrax and chemical bombs in warheads.

Iraq was supposed to grant unfettered access to all weapon sites. Access has been granted to sites, but no effort has been made on Iraq's part to make the inspections easier at those sites. Complying with the letter of the law, but not the spirit has really been the mandate that the Iraqi regime has been following.

Iraq was supposed to grant full air space access to UN reconnaissance planes. Iraq refuses not to target UN aircraft with missiles. We have had some problems with the inspectors going in there and being able to see whether or not there are sites that still exist, however the Iraqis try to hide that fact as well.

• (2430)

What has Canada's response been to this non-compliance and where should we be going? Have we been going in the right direction?

Canada has, and rightly so, acted with the United Nations when it comes to these issues of dealing with Iraqi non-compliance. We still continue to encourage the government and encourage other partners to work through the process of the UN.

Canada supported the UN multilateral action in the 1990-91 action to prevent Saddam from holding on to Kuwait. Canada has supported every UN resolution adopted in the past decade, from sanctions, to establishing the oil for food program, to resolution 1441.

Canada also supported Operation Desert Fox in 1998 when Saddam refused to co-operate with weapons inspectors.

As was mentioned by others, even here in the Canadian Alliance we have questioned the effectiveness of sanctions. When the all party committee actually agreed and there was unanimous consent to ease the sanctions I believe in 2000 to try to help those people, we were on side with that. We have always questioned the effect of the sanctions on people on the ground.

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The Canadian Alliance has been at the forefront of pushing the Canadian government to discuss the issue of Iraqi non-compliance here in the House and as well in many of the discourses the government makes on foreign affairs and foreign policy.

Where do we go from here? In the recommendations we have been making, I know that many of my colleagues, including the Leader of the Opposition and our foreign affairs critic, have made it very clear, unlike some other parties in the House, as to what we should be doing in the next few weeks especially as we are waiting to see what is going to happen. There are a few key things that we can continue to encourage the government to do and encourage the UN especially to go through its process.

The first recommendation obviously is Canada should continue to support the history of the United Nations process. I think we all would like to see the system work through the UN and hopefully be able to respect that process over the next little while.

Canada should begin, as my colleagues have said, some preparations nonetheless because there could be a breakdown in that process. We need to be able to prepare, namely working with our allies, the U.K., U.S.A. and Australia, for the possibility of war. As many have made it clear, we would like to see that as the very last option because no one wins in a situation of war.

That does not mean we should not prepare, that we should work with our allies and prepare for the worst in the event that there is a breakdown. This includes sending military planners to U.S. central command and to take part in certain plans. That is a reality and we should be prepared for that.

This is where even I have some concerns. Over the next little while I will be waiting with anticipation to see the process work itself through. We know that Mr. Powell will be making a report to the UN very shortly. After that there will be a report that Hans Blix will be finishing up, hopefully later on in February.

I would like to see those two things happen before we actually commit to any real military action. Only a few weeks are left. That is something that I think we can allow.

However, military action is justified, especially if Iraq does have any aggressive or threatening moves against any of its neighbours in the next little while that would threaten the stability in that area, as it did in the past against Iran or Kuwait. Also, as we go through the process, military action may be determined by the UN to be something that should be taken especially because of the violations of resolution 1441.

Obviously when I think about the choice of war, as I said at the outset, it is something most Canadians are against. I am concerned that war will only increase the imminent threat, not deter it.

That is something that I think is coming, especially when I hear from a number of the Muslims here in Canada and the gap that is really unfortunately increasing among our western nations and Islamic countries. That is something that I am really concerned about. Unfortunately, I fear that even though we are acting in the best interests of the Iraqi people to try to remove a radical dictator, many radicals may take that as a sign to further inflict their terrorist acts or

bastardize Islam in a way that unfortunately does not do any Islamic groups any good.

That is a fear that I have but that still does not mean we should not be vigilant to do what we can to help promote human rights and promote democracy around the world.

● (2435)

Quite frankly, someone like Saddam Hussein has been in place far too long and is hurting his own people. As I said, from my own family's history that is something that should not be accepted. We have a responsibility to join with our allies to do what we can to prevent that.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Madam Chairman, I have a comment to make arising out of the previous speaker's description of the events leading up to the 1998 evacuation of the weapons inspectors.

The member outright indicated that despite the fact that from 1992 to 1998 considerable progress had been made by the weapons inspectors in terms of dismantling and destroying weapons of mass destruction, that the weapons inspectors ended up leaving Iraq because of non-cooperation and non-compliance by the Iraqi government with the weapons inspection process. It is a matter of record that the weapons inspection process was ongoing. Yes, it ran into frustrations and yes, it ran into roadblocks, but nevertheless it was progressing.

As I mentioned earlier tonight, it is clearly established that far more destruction and dismantling of weapons of mass destruction took place as a result of the weapons inspection process from 1992 to 1998 than took place during the entire gulf war. The reason for the evacuation of the weapons inspectors in 1998 was that the U.S. had actually been spying on Iraq, compromising the weapons inspection process. The U.S. then indicated its intentions to bomb Iraq. Understandably the weapons inspectors evacuated.

Is the member not aware of that fact? Does it not require some correction of the account of the events that took place leading up to the evacuation of the weapons inspectors?

● (2440)

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Madam Chairman, the point I am really trying to make here without getting into all of the details the member raised is the fact that obviously concerns had been raised by the arms inspectors at the time even before the U.S. had made any clear direction that it would go ahead with the bombing of Iraq.

The fact was that a great amount of roadblocks were placed by the Iraqi regime in front of the arms inspectors and they were not able to do their job. The fact was that there was no forthright honesty as to where some of the arms were being stashed away or being built up. There were a lot of concerns and tension was rising to levels where others were concerned enough to get involved because they felt the arms inspectors were not able to do their job effectively.

That is the point here. The regime has not been forthcoming at all when it comes to complying with UN resolutions, and that is why we are where we are today. Even now with resolution 1441 we are still dealing with many violations on behalf of Iraq. That is why I said that hopefully we can resolve this still through the UN and through the process and direction that we have been heading in.

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We will have to ask ourselves a question over the next little while as more evidence becomes clear as to what Canada's role will be. I shared the experience of my family and others whom I see around the world. We cannot stand idly by and let these things happen and have these hardships take place, especially when we are lucky to live in a free and democratic society. Sometimes action is required. Hopefully military action will not be necessary but that is a reality we have to be prepared for.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Madam Chairman, it needs to be said that no member from any political party in the House has suggested for one single moment that we should sit by and do nothing about the concerns with respect to weapons of mass destruction and the potential for them to be still in the hands of Saddam Hussein.

It is very important for us to acknowledge that during the weapons inspection process that took place leading up to the then evacuation in 1998 because of U.S. military aggression, that in fact the inspectors gave testimony. It is a matter of public record that somewhere between 96% and 98% of the weapons of mass destruction were destroyed in that country. To now paint the picture of there being no success with the weapons inspection process does not seem to be very consistent with the facts.

Is the member to some extent not simply reflecting the unending barrage of propaganda coming from the U.S.? As has been said by so many members here tonight, the U.S. seems hell-bent on proceeding with an attack on Iraq in spite of the evidence that the weapons inspection process, while frustrating, is nevertheless working as it needs to be.

• (2445)

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Madam Chairman, the process had been working for a while but as I said, the process broke down, regardless of what type of aggression the member points out. The fact is that many of the arms inspectors were not able to do their jobs and with the heightened tension left that particular country. Over the course of the last number of years, while there have been no arms inspectors present in Iraq, there is evidence pointing to the fact that there has been further buildup again. Unfortunately the demilitarization has been reversed, and it has begun to build up some of its military capability.

We are going to see whether or not the hon. member trusts the information of the United States. A report is going to be presented to the UN by Colin Powell. We basically can take the facts at face value to see if we want to trust that information or not. We also will hear shortly from Hans Blix with his final report and see whether or not there has been a further buildup in that country particularly of military capability.

Unfortunately, I think that ultimately, as much as we would like to agree with the hon. member and say that the arms inspectors had huge levels of success, that would not be factual either. Obviously the process was beginning to be reversed close to the end of the 1990s and now we are seeing that it actually has taken a turn for the worse.

We will see what the results will be. The initial report that Hans Blix came out with says that there have been some serious questions raised as to the current capability of Iraq and how much Iraq has been able to produce over the course of the last number of years. I

look forward to hearing what the U.S. is going to say, as well as what the further report of the arms inspectors will be in the future.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, my colleague mentioned his parents' experience in Uganda and the atrocious violations of human rights that took place there without United Nations intervention. As a matter of fact, as the member would know, when Idi Amin tried to unlawfully expand his territory into Tanzania, there was still no intervention by the United Nations. When that country finally began to retaliate to protect itself and moved into Uganda, resulting in the final ouster of Idi Amin, it was rebuked by a UN resolution for taking action against Uganda.

Our colleague mentioned the faith of Islam and the Muslim community. Often a missing dimension of state craft is an understanding of the religious factors at play. So many atrocities have happened against Muslim people, unprotected by the UN in a variety of cases.

An hon. member: Kosovo.

Mr. Stockwell Day: Kosovo is another clear example.

Is there a sense of distrust in the Muslim community in Canada toward the United Nations, or would that community embrace the UN in as high esteem as most other Canadians do?

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Madam Chairman, I thank the hon. member for his thoughtful question. It would be difficult for me to blanket the entire Islamic community in Canada as either supporting the UN or not, but I have had it communicated to me by a number of different members, some in my own community, the Ismaili community, that they do not quite understand why the UN acts in certain cases and obviously not in others.

In the past there have been some positive influences on the UN from the wider Islamic community and there has been some action. However, there have been some countries where there has been no action, where those particular Muslims, especially if we think of Kosovo and other places around the world, are very suspect of what the interests of the UN are and what constitutes its action and non-action.

It is a valid point. Although I would not care to blanket the whole Islamic community, I think there is definitely some concern as to how action has been taken in the past.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Madam Chairman, we have had a very good debate here this evening on this issue and although it will not be concluded with a vote there is always a possibility that as things evolve we will at some point be asked to stand up.

I will speak a little bit, without repeating things that have been spoken about by colleagues on both sides of the House, on two or three perspectives on this issue: Canada's role at this time in history and Canada's role leading up to the present. I tend to view it as a continuity.

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Some around the House have suggested that Canada is changing in the way it is operating internationally. In my view, I do not think Canada has changed at all. We have a consistent record of peacekeeping, a consistent record of peacemaking where necessary and a consistent record of participation in collective security initiatives at the UN and with NATO. We have a record that goes back to Korea, the Middle East, Congo, Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo. Should Canada be called upon to contribute to a collective security action in Iraq again I am very confident that Canada will play a role.

There are of course some prerequisites before that happens but I am sure Canadians will accept that Canada must continue to play a role with the United Nations and with NATO, albeit in different circumstances and with different preconditions. We have done it before and we will do it again.

One of the members of the New Democratic Party asked whatever happened to Lester Pearson's way of doing things. He was one of our great Canadians who won a peacekeeping medal. My recollection is that when he won the peacekeeping medal it followed Canada's placement of its forces into the Gaza Strip in the Middle East for peacekeeping purposes.

Canadians' use of their military for collective security is not new. It is continuing. I think that essentially is the issue we are being asked to address here.

I want to make three points, which may have been discussed by others, but perhaps not, but I want to make sure that perspective is on the record. In my view, if something matures—and I will not call it a war if it is a war, it will be a collective security action—it will not have evolved out of 9/11 but out of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, what we called the gulf war of 11 or 12 years ago. This is, in a sense, unfinished business from that war. At the conclusion of that military engagement Iraq agreed to disarm.

At this time, most observers believe Iraq has not disarmed. At this time there are inspectors continuing the work, as has been discussed, of trying to determine how much Iraq has or has not disarmed.

Over this past period, just to reinforce the point, we have maintained fairly rigorous sanctions on Iraq, sanctions that have actually harmed human beings in Iraq. We have maintained no-fly zones in the north and south of Iraq, and other things have gone on such as minor military tactical engagements and special forces operations. These things have gone on over the last 10 years on the fringes, not necessarily in the headlines. Iraq continues to be a problem and has not yet shown to be disarmed or disengaged from those weapons that we know it had.

I would also suggest, in the event that we go into a military engagement in this case, that it could end with the lifting of sanctions, with the streaming of aid and with the channeling of resources that are already in Iraq toward the people who need it there, and then a reconstruction.

I want to talk about the evidence of weapons of mass destruction or non-evidence of weapons of mass destruction. In the business of intelligence gathering it is not always possible to make known what one knows.

● (2450)

There are two good reasons for that. I am talking about the intelligence gathering in relation to whether Iraq has or does not have weapons of mass destruction in existence, buried, hidden or whatever.

The two reasons for not making disclosures are: one, we give up our source. By telling our adversary what we know, we likely have given up our source, and we need that source. Second, we give up our edge, our advantage. We give up our advantage because we know what he does not know that we know.

Those are reasons why the United States and our allies may not want at this point in time to give up that information. If there is an end game in process, then they give up their source and then they make their intelligence known.

If February 5 is a date when the U.S. and others are prepared to give up information to the United Nations, then the end game is in process and Saddam Hussein should be aware of it.

In conclusion, as my time has run out, if there is an engagement, this engagement will not be like the others. If we must be involved, then I think we will be involved.

● (2455)

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: It being 12:55 a.m., pursuant to order made on Monday, January 27, the committee will rise and I will leave the Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): It being 12:56 a.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:55 a.m.)

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