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Monday, February 10, 2003

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Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 10, 2003

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1105)

[*English*]

CANADA TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance) moved that Bill C-314, an act to amend the Canada Transportation Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to be here today to lead the first hour of debate on second reading on Bill C-314, my second draw on a private member's bill. To date my focus on private members' business has been the protection and safeguarding of Canadian children. This is a topic for which I feel very passionate, and I work hard to protect children in Canada.

My first private member's bill, Bill C-321, requested that an amendment be made in section 163(1) of the Criminal Code. It stated:

When a person has been convicted of an offence under the child pornography provisions, the court would be authorized to order forfeiture of anything by means of which, or in relation to which, the offence was committed.

This justice themed bill would allow federal, provincial and local police officers to confiscate any equipment or tools used by child pornographers and prevent these tools from being reused or redistributed to other dangerous predators.

I am happy to report that the federal government incorporated the essence of my private member's bill, Bill C-321, into justice Bill C-15A. It received royal assent before the House in December 2002. It is to this level of all-party, non-partisan co-operation to which I appeal for this present bill today, Bill C-314.

For those who do not have a copy of the bill before them, Bill C-314 also deals directly with the safety and protection of Canadian children. Bill C-314 is an act to amend the Canada Transportation Act. It would require that adults travelling with children under the age of 16 to produce identification for these minors before boarding a plane. When we looked into this issue we looked at all angles of transportation and this was one part of the Canada Transportation Act that we felt we could target directly in a private member's bill. Therefore the bill deals with air traffic travel only.

Presently there is no requirement to show identification and adults can board domestic flights with children without being questioned as to guardianship or custody. This requirement would be a preventive measure to child abduction. Although it would not stop child abduction completely, it certain would inhibit a predator's plans.

The genesis of this private member's bill is a classic grassroots effort. A constituent, Ms. Connie Bootland, apprised me of a serious concern she had at the time that a five year old girl went missing from Lethbridge, Alberta. Ms. Bootland was travelling with her own daughter at the same time and her daughter was the same age. While law enforcement teams were desperately searching for the missing child, Ms. Bootland was boarding a plane. She was alarmed when nobody asked for proof of custody or identification of any sort for her daughter while a child of similar description was missing. Ms. Bootland told us that even when she insisted on showing ID she was waved off.

Presently any adult can board a domestic flight in Canada with a minor with no questions needed to be asked. This is a serious loophole, especially in cases where it is non-custodial parent taking the child on a flight possibly clear across the country and away from his or her guardian.

With the rise of Internet relationships between minors and adults, this gap in security should be taken advantage of.

A while ago the member for Medicine Hat and myself went down to a border crossing in my riding, Coutts—Sweetgrass. The immigration and customs officers indicated to us that at that border adults show up at the border expecting to meet people at the border coming from somewhere in Alberta. This happens more often than not. We know of these cases but we do not know of any cases where it happens domestically where somebody can meet somebody on the Internet and set up a meeting.

In the era of post- 9/11, security concerns for all citizens are at the forefront of Canadians' minds. Should the security of children fall between the cracks? No. This private member's bill would help strengthen our protective systems for children.

Private Members' Business

Upon further investigation of the security loophole, I discovered that the very requirement I am presently lobbying for already exists in both international air flights and when crossing the U.S.-Canada border by car. It is considered standard operating procedure for adults to provide identification or proof of custody when boarding an international flight with children.

• (1110)

It is standard operating procedure for adults to provide identification or proof of custody when crossing the Canadian border to the United States with children. Why then is it not standard operating procedure to require adults to provide identification for children when boarding a plane within Canada? Why does the safeguard exist when travelling from our country and not exist when travelling within our country? It is for the implementation of this safeguard that I appeal for the House's support.

Let me now turn to the terrible advantages this loophole provides to predators. More than 40 million people use the Internet, a number projected to rise to one billion during this millennium. Leading search engines have indexed over 500 million web pages and stats indicate that approximately 3.5% of all these web pages are pornographic.

A quote from the *National Post* on August 7, 2001 revealed that Canadians were found to be the fourth ranked provider of child porn images to Internet newsgroups, the form of Internet linking through which most hard core pornography is shared.

I am sure all my colleagues, as well as most Canadians, realize that the Internet is extremely easy for both children and predators to access. The time is long past when simply being at home protects our children. With a push of a button or the click of a mouse, our children are exposed to the worst type of devious seduction and entrapment.

Agnes Fournier, a member of an Interpol specialized crime unit, states "The Internet is the most significant factor in the sexual abuse of children". It is this accessibility that gives the pedophile predator the opportunity to trap unsuspecting victims.

With this promise of online contact between minors and strangers, it would be easy for a predator to purchase plane tickets, travel to a child's hometown and board a plane with him or her to anywhere in Canada. Without this amended safeguard in place, the predator would be asked no questions and waved through just as Ms. Bootland was with her daughter.

Today the legal age of sexual consent is 14. Therefore a 40 year old adult could trick a 14 year old child into a sexual exploitive relationship. This 40 year old predator could lure this minor, for example, on a plane in Vancouver and fly to Halifax, and parents would find themselves powerless to stop it. If, for argument's sake, predators wanted to cross the Canadian border to the United States or fly to a different country, they would be stopped at the point of departure, questioned and required to provide identification or proof of custody for the minor travelling with them. This type of safeguard forces the predator to think twice about the risk of being apprehended and in turn delays or stops the predator's plans.

I want this safeguard in place within Canada. As I stated earlier, the bill would not stop abductions altogether but it would at least

hinder the plans of would-be predators and help prevent Canadian families from the anguish of losing a child.

We all know the John Robin Sharpe case where he was acquitted for possessing short stories of sexually exploitive relationships between adults and children. B.C. Supreme Court justice, Duncan Shaw, stated that they had "artistic merit". While these stories of literature may have included an introduction, a body and a conclusion, the subject matter is violent, coercive and has one specific goal in mind: to normalize sex between children and adults. I do not accept that these stories have any artistic merit at all.

Predators use these stories as tools to convince children it is okay to perform sexual acts with adults. The stories are often fairytale like in nature and use childhood characters to make the children feel comfortable in giving in to the predator's demands.

I stand before the House today to ask for support to mandate protection to combat predators. I believe Bill C-314 would be a preventive security measure to safeguard our children.

On average, strangers abduct 66 children every year in Canada and over 400 children are taken by a non-custodial parent. The loophole for domestic air travel must be closed. It is my hope that this requirement would act as a deterrent for non-custodial parents considering taking their children to other areas of Canada without the guardian's permission.

A strong supporter of my bill is Child Find Alberta. It was the first child find organization in Canada. Five volunteers founded it in Calgary in 1983. Its main purpose is to assist in the search and recovery of missing children and to reunite them with their legal parent or guardian. They do this through education, prevention techniques and locating children. Child Find Alberta also offers other services to prevent future abduction and exploitation of children.

• (1115)

This past summer, Child Find Alberta incorporated new tools to assist its agencies to increase caseloads and ultimately find more children. It used a new software program to help facilitate case management. The time saving software allows more time to work on each case, quick, accurate searches of many files at the same time, and creates instant missing children posters with one click of the mouse. These tools help prevent future abductions and locate children when the worst case scenario is realized.

That non-profit charitable organization supports Bill C-314. It believes, as I do, that steps must be taken to help prevent child abductions and that safeguards must be put in place within Canada to protect our children.

Private Members' Business

I implore my colleagues in the House to support the bill and put in place a safeguard that is already standard operating procedure when travelling from Canada. I ask all members to please make the amendment standard operating procedure within Canada.

I look forward to comments from other parties. I certainly am seeking their support. I think the issue is just a small piece of a larger puzzle, a larger complex issue with regard to protecting our children. It specifically deals with air transportation which is a good place to start. If the bill is approved by the House and sent to committee, it will be an opportunity for parents, the transportation industry and others to come forward with ideas on how to make this work and on how to implement it. We must keep in focus that the one thing we are after is protecting children and making families and children safer in Canada.

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise at this time to indicate that I cannot support Bill C-314 as was introduced by the hon. member for Lethbridge.

As the House is aware, Bill C-314 would enact an amendment to the Canada Transportation Act with the purpose of making it more difficult for adults and non-custodial parents to abduct children by means of air transportation on Canadian domestic flights.

While I fully support the intent of the amendment, the proposed approach would be impossible to implement. Let me explain why.

Under the proposed amendment, all adult passengers travelling by air on a domestic flight with a person under the age of 16 would be required to produce written proof of consent for travel from the young person's parents or from the legal guardian, as the case may be. Without such consent, air travel could not take place. This concept would include any time one parent travels with his or her own child. That parent would have to provide the airlines with written proof of consent from the other parent to prove this was authorized travel.

[*Translation*]

Let us look at some of the repercussions of this bill on the typical two parent family. When a parent goes to buy air tickets for one of the two parents plus a child, he or she will have to indicate that an adult will be travelling with another passenger under the age of 16. The issuer of the plane tickets will be required to check that all requirements have been met before allowing the parent to purchase the tickets.

When two adults are purchasing tickets for a family trip, perhaps the issuer will have to ensure that this is indeed the biological family and not a blended family.

Let us look at the blended family scenario. The written authorization by the natural parent of a child will be required before the child can travel with the family with whom he or she resides.

As well, today's society includes more and more single parents, who have either never been married, or are no longer married because of divorce or widowhood.

What proof would a woman have to produce to demonstrate that her child never knew its father? Would a widowed parent have to

produce a death certificate before an airline would issue tickets for him or her and the child?

● (1120)

[*English*]

Moreover, with the legislation in place, travel would become cumbersome in emergency situations. Without the availability of both parents to complete the written statements, one parent and a child could not initiate travel on very short notice to respond to a sudden family situation, such as a medical emergency or a death.

Determining what sort of proof is acceptable is also brought into question. When a parent arrives at the airport with a minor child what documentation would be considered valid in order to permit the adult to purchase a ticket for travel with that child?

[*Translation*]

Would a handwritten letter from the other parent or legal guardian be sufficient? What would the airline do to determine its validity? Perhaps only a notarized statement would be acceptable.

It is quite obvious that an adult with the intention of abducting a child could produce fake documents. Would the airlines be found responsible for accepting these documents and carrying the passengers?

[*English*]

Conversely, what repercussions would befall an air carrier that was suspicious of the documentation presented and as a result refused transportation only to ultimately find out that the documents were authentic?

I now want to move to another point of concern. The implementation of a regime to enforce this amendment to the Canada Transportation Act would not be without significant costs. These costs would be distributed jointly to travellers and the air travel community. As parliamentarians, we are all very aware of the significant costs associated with air travel. With this legislation, we would be imposing additional costs on families and on our airlines already suffering from the aftermath of September 11. The airlines would have to absorb these costs or, more likely, pass them along to the travelling public in yet higher airfares or additional surcharges.

Currently passengers are not required to identify the age of any ticket purchaser except in the case of infants when, for those under two years of age, free transportation can be obtained if a seat is not required. Children may also travel at a percentage off the full economy fare. To obtain this fare they must be identified by age. However, in recent times fewer children travel on the child fare as the discount fares available for all travellers are usually significantly less than the advertised child fare.

At times special fares are also available which would require individuals to identify that they are senior citizens or fall within an age group defined as youths. Under Bill C-314, at a minimum, at the time of purchase the ticket issuer would have to verify that travel did not involve an individual under the age of 16. However, once having identified that travel involved a minor, the ticket issuer would be required to seek and process the paperwork necessary to permit an individual under 16 years of age to travel.

Private Members' Business

Finally, we should consider situations where, because of the bill, children would be denied the ability to travel.

[*Translation*]

In some cases, the required documents may be very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. One need only think about parents who are not on good terms and who want to prevent one of them from travelling with the child for any reason, those who have voluntarily withdrawn from a child's life and cannot be located to provide the travel authorization required, or those who are simply not at home for one reason or another.

[*English*]

It would be important to set up a system that would allow one parent of a two-parent family to travel with their children without creating an unnecessary or unwieldy burden on both parents and on the travel industry. There would need to be some approved method of establishing the right of an adult to travel with a child. Since provincial jurisdiction in matters of family law would be involved, at the least provincial authorities should be involved in the development of such a scheme.

In summary, I do not deny the laudable goal that the bill seeks to achieve in reducing child abductions. I suggest, however, that the legislative vehicle is incorrect and unworkable. It would create a very difficult and expensive issue for parents and airlines to deal with. For these reasons, I cannot support Bill C-314.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak on my party's behalf on Bill C-314, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act by adding the following after section 68:

Adult Travelling with a Child

68.1(1) The holder of a domestic licence shall not allow an adult passenger to travel with a child under the age of sixteen years unless the adult passenger provides written proof of the consent of the child's parents, or of any other person who has lawful care or charge of the child, to travel with the child.

So, the first subsection deals with the application of standards to international travel. The Canada Transportation Act requires parents whose children will be travelling with an adult outside Canada to obtain consent.

This amendment would apply this standard to travel within Canada. Since the distances are great, both within Quebec and Canada, the Bloc Québécois considers the adoption of such measures for domestic flights to be justified.

I was listening to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport talk about the difficulties for airlines when it comes to families. The government surely examined all these situations when it made consent of both parents, or parents, or guardians travelling with children a requirement on flights departing Canada.

The distance from one end of the country to the other is almost as great as the distance to various international destinations. Obviously, this standard would ensure that those intending to kidnap a child could not do so. There is the impression that this would make things more difficult for the airlines, but, in all likelihood, this would make their work easier.

If children under the age of 16 had to get their parents' consent, the Bloc Québécois believes, first of all, that a standard for all children could be established and, furthermore, the government could surely find an effective way of applying this standard and of involving the airlines so that each time a plane ticket is reserved, the forms, consent and authorizations can be sent immediately.

Currently, this is done only for international flights, but it would not be more difficult to apply that requirement to all flights and to obtain consent for all children travelling. This might even be a more effective measure and one that would be better understood by the public if it was done unilaterally and if the consent of the parents was required whenever they want to have their children take a trip.

After a few months, it would become obvious that families would be very understanding, for the simple reason that this motion seeks to improve their children's safety. We want to ensure that children are always with people who are there to protect them, and that the adults who travel with them do not entertain any wrong ideas. There is no doubt that we could very quickly have effective measures. It is our duty to ensure that this is the case.

If we have to adopt such a legislative amendment, we must ensure that the way children are registered is orderly and that consent is obtained through official forms. We must have standard forms to avoid, among other things, having all kinds of documents going around, which could lead to the forging of such documents.

This measure could even benefit those who travel abroad. This is particularly true since there are few children among air travellers, or among those who go through the gates at airports. In the case of international flights, the forms are not officially recognized by the federal government and others, and there are no standards, since there are few or fewer children who need that authorization.

• (1130)

If this were the case for all flights in and out of Canada, there could certainly be a procedure for preparing consent documents and reports that would be efficient, well recognized and simple to use for families. This would perhaps be less complicated than the current situation for international travel.

We sincerely think that supporting such a measure would ensure safety for families and parents. Obviously it is never easy for families where the parents are separated or divorced, but I think that for the children, this is worth considering in order to protect them better. Clearly it is for their safety and not for that of their parents.

I think that families would understand that if the government implemented such a measure, it would be for the protection of their own children. This would prevent kidnapping of all types. We in the Bloc Québécois think this measure is very appropriate.

Subsection 2 of section 68 reads as follows:

In the case of a non-custodial parent who travels with a child under the age of sixteen years, the holder of a domestic licence shall not allow that parent to travel with the child unless the parent provides written proof of the consent of the custodial parent, or of any other person who has lawful care or charge of the child, for the non-custodial parent to travel with the child.

Private Members' Business

Obviously, in addition to the parents of the child this is referring to anyone who has lawful care of the child.

Now, the issue of custody or lawful care is subject to judicial authorization throughout Quebec and Canada. There are always official documents, be they divorce agreements, authorizations, or custody agreements, that the families all have copies of.

All these documents are official. They are judicial authorizations, or documents that the parents or families can very quickly access. Parents can very easily prove that they have legal custody of a child and authorization should be required. So that is fine.

We seriously believe that standardizing authorization or consent for parents or legal guardians for both domestic and international flights—as I said earlier, this obligation exists for children on international flights—is a security measure that would be very well accepted by families.

Obviously, if this were to become a virtual norm, that children younger than 16 had to obtain parental authorization to travel on domestic and international flights, the federal government could certainly develop a efficient and simple way to obtain consent without the need for all kinds of documents, as is currently the case for travel on international flights. There are many ways to obtain parental consent.

If children under the age of 16 were automatically required to have authorization to fly, there could be an efficient process that would be respected by families and that would be well used by families or those who have lawful care of the child, which would mean that children would always be safe when travelling with an adult.

For all these reasons, the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-314, which requires holders of a domestic licence—airlines operating routes within Canada—to obtain the consent of the child's parents or of any other person who has lawful custody of the child under 16, in order to be able to travel with the child on domestic flights, as in currently the case for international flights.

I cannot stress this enough: this measure ensures improved security for families and those who have lawful custody of children when children under 16 travel by air. We can be sure that they will be traveling with people who respect their rights.

[*English*]

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from the Alliance for putting this bill forward so that we will have the opportunity to discuss it and look at all the issues that relate to possible child abductions.

At first blush, the automatic reaction is that of course we would support this. How can we not support something like this? It just makes sense that we would do whatever we can to aid in an abduction. Quite frankly I thought that way too the first time I saw it. However, I look forward to the ongoing debate because after reading it through, putting it in context, and seeing how it would be put into practice, I have some misgivings as to how it would work.

I have been involved with the legislative committee on Bill C-17 and the issues regarding the identification of people on an ongoing basis, having to provide identification for this and that. There are

concerns that even if people wanted to go anywhere in Canada they would have to have some form of identification.

I am a more conscious now as to some of the concerns that people have, including myself, about always having to provide identification in a country where we are not used to doing that. Part of our freedom is the ability to move without someone questioning us as to our identity or those of our children. It becomes part of the discussion when asking for identification, even if it is for a child that is with a person, because it involves the whole specifics of the family background.

It is a short bill. It states:

The holder of a domestic licence shall not allow an adult passenger to travel with a child under the age of sixteen years unless the adult passenger provides written proof of the consent of the child's parents, or of any other person who has lawful care or charge of the child, to travel with the child.

Again, everyone would say that absolutely, positively just makes sense.

I represent a riding with a good proportion of first nations individuals who have a different way of dealing with family dynamics. When the bills speaks of domestic travel, it is talking about a flight from one small community to another, or for example to Winnipeg for medical treatment. Often it is an extended family member who has the child living with him or her. The child living there is not under the order of a court. It is just the way it is. It is okay for this month that children may be living with an aunt, or for that matter they may all be living in the same house because that is the situation in a number of cases, but the parents may not be there. There is no legal guardian as such in respect to a legal document.

People may ask how often that happens. I can tell members that it is a real situation in my riding, not just in a few instances but in hundreds or thousands. It is an issue even in a riding such as mine, so as I thought about this I had some concerns.

The second part of the bill says:

In the case of a non-custodial parent who travels with a child under the age of sixteen years, the holder of a domestic licence shall not allow that parent to travel with the child unless the parent provides written proof of the consent of the custodial parent, or of any other person who has lawful care or charge of the child, for the non-custodial parent to travel with the child.

Again it makes absolute sense, but let us look at this. I hate to admit that my colleague from the governing party would be right on an issue. He talked about what is happening in the airline industry. It is being taxed to the limit as to what it has to provide now. That industry alone, not every other transportation industry, is being asked to incorporate all of this information on travellers and be responsible for it. I do not think that necessarily should be the job of the airline industry.

Private Members' Business

•(1135)

This is a very good issue. I am wondering whether it would not be possible to incorporate this exact same clause in relationship to custodial parents and apply it under a justice bill. It could be brought back when there is an agreement for custodial parents built in the legislation. The subject could then be done as part of an agreement, rather than putting the onus on the airline industry to have that proof.

That way we are only addressing parents or individuals who are criminals. We are not looking at each and every innocent individual who is travelling. I know that my colleagues in the Alliance are not pleased with legislation that targets innocent individuals for the sake of trying to fix a problem somewhere else. I will not get into the specifics of it.

The bottom line is that more innocent Canadians are being asked to prove their innocence before they have done anything wrong. This could be an adult travelling with a child, it could be me, for example, travelling to Winnipeg with one of my grandchildren. Has something happened in our country now where if I am with my grandchild and I take a trip to Winnipeg that I should be questioned whether I have consent for the child to be with me or, for that matter, one of my own children.

Many people out there will be saying that they have proof that this is their child. How many of us travel with the birth certificates of our children? Not even everybody has the birth certificates of their children or written proof that these children are theirs.

I think of my father when one time he had to round up nine birth certificates. There had never been a need to have them. My parents probably could not afford to get them at the time either because they had nine children. My father had to come up with the birth certificates of his children to receive his pension. This is reasonable enough.

I think of that incident now in the sense of numerous parents who do not carry that kind of documentation. There is a cost involved in getting that documentation.

I relate a lot of this to my own riding because I have seen these things happen. I have seen problems with lack of identification in my riding. I do not think there is an objection by people who travel internationally and across the border to the U.S. They have not obviously needed that kind of information. It is tougher then to follow-through with actions and orders that have been taken within a person's country than to pursue those across a border.

However, within our own country there may be ways for us to address these issues without having to ask each and every parent or family member to have that kind of consent. At first blush, it seems absolute and how can we not agree with it?

I am looking forward to the ongoing debate and, if possible, to come up with a way, through this discussion, to address some of the concerns that I have raised, specifically concerning my own riding. We will deal with it when it comes time for a vote.

•(1140)

Mr. Rex Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls, PC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member from the Canadian Alliance for bringing this bill forward. I know he has great intentions with this legislation.

I am a member of the transport committee, and it seems to me that all this legislation would be doing is ensuring that the airline industry becomes more responsible for doing things that the court system should be more involved with regarding getting people's consent.

I firmly believe that Bill C-314 would only make an already bad system worse. I believe the system is unmanageable. For some reason or another we would be putting liability back onto the airline industry. Workers would be adversely affected if something were to be missed in the system. It is never the bureaucrats who get the underhand but rather it is the workers. As a result of this it is difficult to support Bill C-314. It is a great bill which draws attention to the fact that something needs to be done.

There are many loopholes which people can use to escape from this country other than using the airline industry. For some reason or another people are taking children who are not their own, and they are taking these children to other countries where it is difficult for them to get out. Right now in Canada if we block one hole individuals will use another hole in the system.

I cannot see how the bill before us would come close to addressing the problem. I firmly believe the court system will have to become totally involved. Adults use their persuasive ideas and tricks on children to get them to go with them. As a result, children go missing. There are numerous cases in my province of Newfoundland and Labrador alone where people ended up taking the children and moving outside the province.

We must have resources available so law enforcement can do its job. When individuals take a child away from the person with custody, they are doing this with help from other people and they are doing it in a way to ensure they will not get caught. The biggest problem is that the RCMP is doing the best job it can to ensure this does not take place.

The last thing people will do is use the airline system and fly somewhere with these children. Most people will not fly because the airlines have a record on who travelled and when. They know who is travelling on their airline. As soon as people get an airline ticket their name is put in the system. Officials can check to see whether the individual did in fact travel on the plane and whether or not they had any children with them. However the children may have a different identity. The system is failing them because if they have a different identity officials will never know if they are the right children officials are looking for. As a result, I do not see the bill doing what the member is looking for.

I know the member is sincere and concerned as we all are about the fact that people are travelling with children who are not their own. With this legislation we would again be putting the burden back on a system that is unmanageable as it is. I firmly believe that we must have more enforcement. At the same time however, people in these situations will not do a lot of air travel. If they travel at all, they will travel by road or by sea. They will escape the airline system. As a result I cannot see why we are doing what we are doing right now.

Private Members' Business

I do understand that there is a major concern in Canada about this. We need to be putting more emphasis on our police forces. We can try to block loopholes in the system, but as soon as we block one, we open up another.

● (1145)

I have travelled by train. I can go to a train station with people who are not my own. It just opens the door further and further.

We need to look at enforcement through our police system. The court system needs to be involved. Most important, if we give the police the tools to do the job, I firmly believe we could do more for the country and for those children who have been taken without permission. We have these support groups. We know the concerns of people in these organizations. We should put emphasis on that.

We need to put more money into the system. This bill will not stop people from taking children who do not belong to them. They probably would not fly because they would be an easy target. Most times they would go by road or by sea. We need the enforcement there.

I commend the hon. member for bringing this forward because it is an area of concern. However, unless my colleagues tell me that we should looking at something differently, we will not support the bill as it is.

We are always open to new ideas, and it is important that he has brought these ideas forward. However right now we should be looking at putting money into enforcement to ensure the resources are there to do the job. We should stop this on the ground before it starts, identify it quickly and fast track it before it gets out of control. If we had more police forces, more undercover agents and more money, we could take action as soon as we suspected something was wrong.

We know at times one or the other parent becomes disgruntled and takes the children. Sometimes it is not because of a broken marriage but because people do not have a sense of what is right. They just want to make people's lives miserable and they take children who are not their own. If we had more police officers, we could combat this on the ground first. The world and the country would be better off for this.

Unless my colleagues tell me that I have missed something drastically with regard to the bill, we will not support it. I thank the hon. member for bringing it forward.

● (1150)

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we have another tremendous initiative by the member for Lethbridge who is interested in protecting children.

Before I get into a discussion of his private member's bill, I just want to point that all Saskatchewan celebrates today. I know my colleague loves curling. We were able to watch the Canadian juniors one evening last week. I had a good time with the young people and met some of the teams. I want to make everyone aware that on Saturday the Saskatchewan junior men's won the championship and yesterday the junior girls' won it. Once again we have made a tremendous contribution to Canada and to the sport of curling. I know my colleague will appreciate that.

I am sorry to see once again a situation where we have paralysis by analysis. My colleague has brought forward an issue which is worth talking about. We hear all the reasons, particularly from the government members, why this will not work. I find it unfortunate that when finally someone tries to protect children, we have parties who do nothing and want to do nothing.

Last week we discussed the child pornography bill. One thing that concerns most of us on this side of the House is the definition and defence for child pornography is being broadened, not narrowed. We want that material banned. We want our children protected. The government for some reason is unable to do that.

The phrase "paralysis by analysis" comes to mind because there are all the reasons on that side of the House why we cannot move ahead and why we should not do this to protect our children, but no reasons and no suggestions about what we might do.

This is a great start to deal with the problem. We all recognize that there is a problem. On average, 66 children are abducted by strangers in Canada every year. That does not sound like a big number until we start to break it down and realize that more than once a week a family within Canada is affected by having their children abducted.

I listened to the member speak earlier. I wonder if there is anything more that would tear parents and families apart such as having a child abducted from their family. If we can do something to deal with that issue, we need to take a look at it. There are over 400 children a year, which is more than one a day, who are taken by non-custodial parents from parents who have been given custody of those children.

This grassroots private member's bill was inspired by a constituent who, as we heard earlier, on the day a young girl in Lethbridge was kidnapped, was travelling with her own daughter. When she got on the plane, she thought there should at least have been some check to ensure if the girl who was with her, who was about the same age as the young child who had been abducted, was in fact her child. The airline declined to do that, but she felt it was important that there be some protection for children in those situations. My colleague from Lethbridge has seen fit to bring forward a bill to deal with that.

Private Members' Business

Currently there are no I.D. checks required for children travelling with adults within Canada by air. We are all used to having our I.D. checked. We have to have photo I.D. when we get on the main airline in Canada. We are used to that situation now, but there is no I.D. check required for children travelling domestically. There is one required for children who are travelling with adults when they depart Canada by air or when they are crossing the border to the United States by car. I have had this apply to my own family. We travel with my nephews and nieces and often my kids travel with their uncles and aunts. We write a letter stating that I am the legal guardian of this child and that so-and-so has permission to travel with the child. It is not a complicated affair to put that in place.

The loophole in our domestic air travel can easily be taken advantage of by any adult who wants to travel and is willing to travel unlawfully with minor children. We need to something to deal with that.

Bill C-314 is really a preventive measure. It addresses two areas. First, it addresses the issue of non-custodial parents. We hope this requirement will act as a deterrent for non-custodial parents who want to move their children across this country to get them away from the parent who has been given custody.

Second, because of the Internet and the proliferation of it, we see it provides an increased opportunity for adults to contact minors for the purpose of meeting them. It seems that hardly a week goes by where we do not read about adults who have gone online, posed usually as a young person, tried to gain the confidence of the young persons, then have met them and have begun to transport them.

• (1155)

As my colleague has mentioned, we have some controls in place at the borders to prevent people from coming across the borders with these young people who should not be with them. However we really have nothing within Canada to deal with this. It is important that we take a look at how we can protect our children and what we can do to ensure that people do not take advantage of our kids. This requirement really acts as a deterrent in that situation. Realistically this will not stop child abduction. People who want to break the law will do it anyway. However this would put in the way one more deterrent or barrier for people who try to interfere with our children.

I find it interesting that Child Find in Alberta has been informed about the bill and has some understanding of what the member is trying to do with it. It is one of the most authoritative organizations of that bill. It has committed itself to backing the member and trying to make it work.

The other parties raised some interesting points this morning about some of the logistics of how we would do this. I also think we can make this far too complicated. Persons who now travel out of the country can have a letter from the guardian of a child giving permission for the child to travel with that adult and that seems to work fairly well.

I do not think this has to be costly. One thing brought up by the government was that it would be expensive. We have not been in favour of the entire air registry to be put in place, which will be very expensive. I find it interesting that the same government, which thinks it can make an air registry of every traveller in the country

work, is not willing to also try to identify some of the principles and expectations to look after our children. It is an interesting concept that the government is willing to spend money galore trying to keep track of adults, just as it has spent money on the gun registry. It has spent well over a billion dollars trying to track every gun in the country but there is an absolute unwillingness to find out what is going on with our children.

Our suggestion today is that it would be well worth sending this to transportation committee so it can flesh out the details and put forward amendments. The bill is worth the consideration of the committee. It needs to take a look at it. There may be some improvements it can make. It needs to be taken to that level.

I ask members to consider the bill, and that the committee deal with it.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand and thank a member of Parliament, my Alliance Party colleague from Lethbridge, for putting children and their safety first and most important in decision making in this place. I know you are aware, Mr. Speaker, that this is something I have been pushing for quite some time with regard to the terrible atrocities that are going on in this country, where people are abusing children left and right through child pornography. They are child cripplers and child abusers, yet in the 10 years I have been here we have not had any legislation of any nature coming forward from that side of the House to deal with these problems.

I cannot understand how people can deliver throne speech after throne speech, budget speech after budget speech, talking about all the wonderful things the government is going to implement to protect our children, and still make the same comments in the same speeches as we go from year to year. Nothing is happening.

Thank goodness we have people like the member for Lethbridge who, when he says he wants to do something to protect our children, does it. I am glad he was lucky enough to hit a draw in order to present it. I have several bills, along different lines, to protect children and I cannot seem to get the luck of the draw. It is unfortunate that this is the way it operates.

What I cannot understand is why anyone in the House, on this side or the far side, does not say when we have a bill before us that does protect children, "Let us do what we can to work together to make sure that is what happens". Instead I can guarantee that members will stand on their feet, vote no on this and that will be the end of it. We will hear no more in the future from anyone over there or anywhere else because it has already been dealt with in what I think is a very unfair fashion.

We should start recognizing the important things in this country that we want to and have to deal with. We should put the protection of children on the table and say, "Yes, this is one thing we can all agree on". For heaven's sake let us work together and start doing all we can to protect our children's safety, because there are tens of thousands of young kids in Canada who are being abused. More and more every day are being added to the list because we just do not do anything.

Here is an opportunity to take one small step to protect kids. We should support the bill and fix whatever might be wrong with it to make it better to implement. We should work together to do that and not just say no to a principle and an idea that is so essential. I for one am really tired of a group of adults, grandparents and parents, who sit in here year after year and do not bring forward anything to deal with the problem, except Bill C-20 which is supposed to get rid of artistic merit and does not because we are going to replace it with "public good". It is all nonsense. Let us start getting some common sense in our brains and be determined. We should sit in our chairs and say that children in this country are in dire need of being better protected and let us make up our minds that we are going to do it.

I thank the member for Lethbridge for making the effort. It is too bad that we have people who will not support an effort of this nature.

• (1200)

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.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—SENDING TROOPS TO IRAQ

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ) moved:

That this House consider the sending of troops to Iraq by the government only after the United Nations Security Council has passed a resolution explicitly authorizing a military intervention in Iraq.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this morning to speak on this motion of the Bloc Québécois, especially since there is a glimmer of hope now. For the past little while, the past few months, the world appeared to be trapped in a logic of war. With the new proposal put forward by France and Germany, which Russia seems to support, there is some light at the end of the tunnel. We are witnessing something of a shift toward a logic of peace instead. Is there any way of resolving this conflict peacefully rather than militarily? I will come back later to the Franco-German proposal.

I would like to caution my colleagues and those listening against taking extreme positions on this issue. As in many issues, nothing about this issue is black and white. I think it horribly wrong to say that the conflict can only be resolved militarily and that a military intervention is necessary.

I think that saying the opposite is just as valid. We cannot say that we will never take military action. That too would be wrong. So, both extremes must be avoided.

The proposal put forward by the Bloc Québécois today fits in the wide gap between both extremes. It leaves the door open to resolving the conflict peacefully rather than militarily, without stating that military action will never be taken. It seem to me that the Bloc's position is rather wise.

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It is a good thing that the official opposition and the Bloc Québécois are there to raise fundamental questions on this issue, such as having a vote in the House. The motion we are moving today basically provides that troops cannot be sent as long as the UN has not passed a second resolution explicitly mentioning military intervention. If it were not for the opposition, the government would not be holding this kind of debate. The government seems to be saying that it will not allow us to vote on this issue, that it is up to the executive branch alone to make such a decision. It might be prepared to consider holding a consultative vote in this House after a decision has been made by the executive.

The opposition has to force the government to vote on the important issues in this debate. We have to resort to procedural tactics and opposition days to force the government to take a stand and vote. Otherwise, the executive branch would just make the decision, based on its own criteria, its own evidence and its own philosophy. The House would have no input at all, which is totally unacceptable to us.

If we look at Canada's position from the beginning, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of National Defence and even the Prime Minister has frequently told us, "Wait, wait". No wonder we keep referring to the government's "wait-and-see" approach in most of our questions. That is Canada's approach.

I want to remind my hon. Liberal colleagues that they are breaking with tradition and with a purely Canadian way of doing things. There was world recognition of Canada's vision with regard to international matters. Remember Pearson and Trudeau. They had clear positions that were often different from those of the United States.

What have we been seeing since this debate began? There has been shilly-shallying and pussyfooting around. We get the feeling that the Canadian government does not know where it is going, or does not want to know as long as it does not have the green light from the Americans. This is a sovereigntist speaking. I think that Canada's sovereignty is even under attack right now on a number of fronts, the war against Iraq being one of them.

I am certain that the telephone lines between Ottawa and Washington are humming every day and that the Americans are putting pressure on Canadian ministers. The latter must try to maintain a balance between Canada's traditional position, which favours pacifism and making an international contribution, and the American position, which strongly favours war and seeks Canada's support in this war.

Sometimes, it almost seems as if Canada is the 51st state. Canada's military is regularly integrated into American units. There is the whole issue of interoperability with the American forces. This is extremely important for Canada. There is also the whole issue of customs. Almost identical systems are being established. In the event of a catastrophe, there are agreements that would allow American forces on Canadian soil. And then there are all the American takeovers of Canadian companies.

• (1205)

In the end, we wonder if we are not the 52nd state. Sovereignty like that—I am telling you, I am a sovereigntist—is not something I would want.

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Would we be able to resist the attraction and economic power of the Americans? We probably could do better than Canada is doing right now.

It is a little harmful and a shame to listen to this debate and to see that Canada is still following in the footsteps of the Americans. I wonder where the days of Canadian credibility on the international scene have gone. I think Canada's credibility is tarnished right now. However, it is not too late to do something about it.

Yesterday, some countries within NATO protested because they were no longer willing to protect Turkey in the event of American action in Iraq. Turkey lies between Europe and Asia. The people there are afraid, because if they allow the Americans to use their base, it is certain that the Iraqis would retaliate.

France, Germany and Belgium have said that it would perhaps be important for NATO not to state its position immediately. However, the Americans had wanted NATO to indicate where it stood. There still has not been any word from Canada. Therefore, it is felt that Canada has not expressed its opposition to NATO protecting Turkey.

People have been too quick to press for military action, and in that sense, France and Germany's proposal is welcome.

I would like to talk about the work by the inspectors, which is not finished, as everyone agrees except for the Americans and probably the British. The inspectors have returned after two days of consultations with Iraqi authorities and seem to be saying that there is better cooperation.

One could say that the only good thing about America's threat against Iraq is that Iraq is being forced to do something. However, the way Americans are handling this issue leaves us wondering.

Since the beginning, we have clearly preferred leaving the inspectors to do their work. Mr. Blix, the chief inspector, had said it would be very slow going in Iraq. The inspectors should be given all the time they need to do their work.

Until now, inspectors have not found much. The chief inspector even said that they have not found anything compromising against Iraq. They have been there for a few months already. He criticized the lack of cooperation, but Iraq now appears to be demonstrating better intentions.

It is therefore important to allow the inspectors to do their work. In this light, the French-German proposal is very interesting, because it would triple the number of inspectors. The most positive aspect of it is that there would be no military intervention; it would be peacekeepers who would assist the inspectors and who would control the territory to ensure that Iraq complies with resolution 1441.

We believe this to be a very good approach. In my opinion, and I think the members of the Bloc Québécois would agree with me, if a resolution of this type were before the UN, the Bloc Québécois would support it, much more than military intervention based on the little proof gathered so far.

Let us take a look at the facts, or what the Americans often refer to as intelligence. Mr. Powell failed to convince me last time he gave

his presentation of the evidence. I think that the Americans may know a great deal, but they still do not want to reveal it.

If the Americans know where weapons of mass destruction can be found, why do they not tell the inspectors? That does not appear to be the case. Colin Powell went to the UN to give a dubious demonstration, which does not justify, in my opinion, a major armed intervention in Iraq. Many people are questioning the veracity of the facts.

It was mentioned that the last time Iraq was attacked in 1990, it was because babies had been strangled in nurseries. Some years later, we learned that it was staged, and that those events had not taken place at all.

As a result, we are justified in wondering if the CIA is not trying to present us with evidence that does not exist in order to justify an armed intervention like last time. Since that the inspectors have some sort of neutrality, it should be up to them to provide us with an explanation. And so far, they have said that there is insufficient evidence.

● (1210)

As for the link between al-Qaeda and Iraq, no one was able to publicly demonstrate the existence of such a link, and particularly not the British. The last time, they got caught with a text written by an American student that they retransmitted directly. They released this text and said it was the British position. However, that report had been written several years earlier by an American student. Even the spelling mistakes were the same.

One wonders about the validity of this evidence. This is why we feel it is important to let the inspectors complete their work.

As regards the logic of war, it is my opinion that the Americans have been using it since the beginning. It is easy to realize that it is indeed the case. With a deployment of 150,000 troops at Iraq's doorstep, they are very present in the area. It is obvious that they absolutely want to get in there, that they do not want to leave any room for a peaceful resolution to this conflict. They are positioning their troops in the area, and this will make it very difficult later on to remove these troops and say "we are going home" without making the President look like a fool. There is every indication that the Americans want to get involved at any cost. This logic of war has been there from the beginning.

Now, with the suggestion made by France and Germany, we have a proposal for a peaceful solution under which no shots would be fired, and under which the inspectors would be able to do their job three times more quickly, because there would be three times more inspectors and they would be under the protection of peacekeepers.

I am also familiar with peacekeeping missions, because I went to Bosnia on an observation and peacekeeping mission, with the Royal 22nd Regiment. Road blocks are a common thing. If there are laboratories that continually produce weapons of mass destruction, although we have not seen them—we were told that they are in operation, but we have no evidence of that—I imagine that the peacekeepers could set up road blocks and control traffic on a regular basis.

So, what the French and the Germans have proposed, with the increasingly obvious support of the Russians, seems to me to be a very feasible solution.

What is this suggestion currently creating? It is creating a terrible split between the U.S. and Europe. The French and the Europeans—particularly those from what Rumsfeld calls the old Europe, that is France and Germany—want to downplay the logic of war. They have been trying to do so from the beginning. They have taken an additional step by making a very constructive proposal.

There are divisions of this type within a number of bodies. I have already referred to NATO. There are 19 allies, with others added at the latest Prague summit, which I attended. These 19 are not, however, unanimous on protecting Turkey from retaliation by Iraq. These splits are quite evident and not good for international relations.

Why do the Americans insist on such bellicosity? We presume it is out of a desire to establish a new order in the Middle East. Israel's support of the Americans, moreover, is not without significance. Having been there recently, I understand why there is general agreement that a new world order is needed in the Middle East. Some are of the opinion that such a new world order is possible with the Americans.

There is much to be discussed. There is all the matter of preemptive strikes, in other words that the United States could attack a country on the basis of what is sometimes superficial evidence. This is very dangerous, because it could create an international precedent and Pakistan, for instance, could not be stopped from attacking India, or North Korea South Korea, because the Americans have done the same on their own initiative.

The only international forum there is, as we have often said, in the UN. Action must be multilateral, involving all the countries within the UN. That is, moreover, the reason behind the creation of the UN: to settle international conflicts without resorting to the law of the jungle, where the strongest wins out.

These debates must, therefore, involve the UN. What our motion says is that the Bloc Quebecois will not budge until such a time as there has been a second, and explicit, resolution on the deployment of troops. Even then, we retain the option to object, if there has been no vote in this House. We dealt with that point last week. We are now dealing with the second UN resolution, which is extremely important to us.

What is important at this time to the Bloc Quebecois is to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. Everyone has children, and many of my colleagues have spouses. We need to put ourselves in the shoes of the Iraqis. They cannot complain about the regime under which they are living, the regime of Saddam Hussein; they know what would have happened to them if they did.

● (1215)

Rumsfeld's philosophy is to drop 3,000 bombs over a 48 hour period. Is that not too high a price to pay for a single individual? We must consider that.

I have a 21-year-old daughter, and some of her friends have children now. I can imagine the lives of Iraqi people; they get up in

Supply

the morning, the children are a bit nervous and the slightest noise makes them jump; the mother goes out to buy some groceries wondering if war will break out by the evening; the father leaves for work, to earn a living, unsure of whether or not he will still have a family when he comes home; people look up at the sky to determine whether the Anglo-American thunder will be striking them that day.

I think these people must be given a voice, and this voice is that of the international community. That is what it is there for. We waited too long to take action in Rwanda and hundreds of thousands died because we did.

Today, we must not wait for war to come. If 3,000 bombs are dropped on the presidential palaces in Baghdad, there will be civilian losses, and young children who are in school today will not get to go in the future, because they will be dead.

This conflict must be averted. Efforts must be made to find a peaceful solution. We are not excluding military action as a last resort. But at this stage of the game, it would be premature to take military action immediately. We would not be giving peace a chance. It think it is important that we give peace a chance.

Today, the Bloc Quebecois is putting its proposal on the table. It is pretty simple: unless there is a second UN resolution, we are against sending troops. The issue of the vote was resolved last week when we said that, unless the House approves such action in a vote, we are against it. For us to give consent, it must be explicit in the UN's second resolution that troops will be sent. But that is the very last resort.

In closing, I urge Canada to stand up and to try to improve its image internationally—right now it is seen as the 52nd American state. I believe that we can find a way around this internationally and make a positive contribution to the resolution of this conflict in the peaceful tradition of Canada.

● (1220)

[*English*]

Hon. Gar Knutson (Secretary of State (Central and Eastern Europe and Middle East), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is too great a divide between the member's party and the government. However on the point about whether a second resolution is absolutely mandatory, I would point out that in the past the United Nations has not always done its job.

Could the member comment on the situation in Kosovo where there was a veto but the international community, through the work of NATO, decided to go ahead and launch military action? Does the member think that was a mistake?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to reply to this question as I did during the take note debate, last week, after the speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, among others.

We believe that things often happen on a case by case basis. Regarding Kosovo, my hon. colleague might be surprised, but we feel it was justified, because we were witnessing a massacre, as we did in Rwanda.

Supply

I think that it was justified for Kosovo. We even waited a bit too long before acting. I think that the current situation with Iraq is not the same as with Kosovo. It is not the same situation. Military intervention can be taken, without irrefutable proof from the Americans and before the inspectors have finished their work.

Of course, there have been human rights abuses in Iraq; everyone agrees on this. But does this justify a major American intervention à la Rumsfeld, with 3,000 bombs in 48 hours to destroy all the country's infrastructures and cause huge losses of civilians? I think not.

We do not completely rule out the military option, but there will have to be major conditions. Proof is required, a vote in this House is required, and the UN's resolution must be very explicit about troops being sent.

[*English*]

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I commend the Bloc for bringing this matter forward for debate, although I must say that personally I disagree with the motion and the sentiments expressed by my hon. colleague.

He says that we have to give peace a chance before going to war right away. Would he not agree with me that it is simply a matter of fact that Iraq has been in material breach of the ceasefire agreement to the gulf war in 1991 and to 16 United Nations Security Council resolutions since that time over a period of 12 years; that 12 years of embargos that have hurt the Iraqi people because of their misapplication by the Iraqi regime have not worked to bring Iraq out of material breach of its international obligations; and that 12 years of diplomacy have not worked?

If the member believes that we are rushing to the credible threat of force as a means of compelling compliance with the United Nations, how many more years would he like us to wait? Twelve years—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I agree that Iraq has violated several UN resolutions, but can we say that violation of a UN resolution automatically calls for war? Perhaps not.

Can we say that after twelve violations there should be war? At this time, I think not, but the Americans think the opposite.

Until now, the UN has restrained the Americans. Resolution 1441 has been a factor. And by the way, the UN remains seized of the matter. So normally discussions should be continued.

I would also say this to my colleague. How is it that UN inspectors were asked to withdraw from Iraq for four years, from 1998 to 2002, and that suddenly there is urgency, bombing is the answer and this issue absolutely needs to be resolved.

It is a bit late now. The moment the inspectors left Iraq, if the Americans thought there were still illicit arms activities going on, then they should have intervened at that point and forced the return of the inspectors sooner. It is highly debatable. My colleague may be right, but then again I may be right. Time will tell.

●(1225)

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is an admirer of Winston Churchill. He has quoted him a few times. I would like to know if my colleague from Saint-Jean agrees with me that the following Churchill quote applies to this government.

Churchill said—and I think this applies to this government:

They are decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all-powerful for impotence.

Mr. Claude Bachand: I think this quote from Churchill applies perfectly to this government. Incidentally, in my speech earlier I mentioned that since the beginning, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister have been telling us, “Wait, wait, wait”.

Their approach is such that no one can say exactly what Canada's position is. I said so in my speech. It is impossible to say that Canada is fully behind the United States, because Canada has not yet given its support. Nor is it possible to say that Canada is searching for a peaceful solution, because it has not said anything about it. Canada is not doing enough, in our opinion, to find a peaceful solution. It would be in the tradition of this government to make an international contribution to settle conflict peacefully.

We do not know where this government stands yet. To my colleague, the member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, I say that the quote from Churchill, a politician who is highly regarded by the government House leader, unfortunately applies perfectly to his government.

[*English*]

Mr. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague from Saint-Jean if he has actually read resolution 1441 of the United Nations Security Council. If so, he should be aware that under section 4 of that resolution it states:

—that false statements or omissions in the declarations submitted by Iraq...shall constitute a further material breach...

Further on it states “that such a material breach will require serious consequences”.

Is he not aware of that? Does he not agree with Hans Blix that Iraq still has not come to terms with its obligations and that, as clearly demonstrated by Secretary Powell last week, is in material breach and has provided an inaccurate and incomplete report to the United Nations?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to draw it to the attention of my colleague that Hans Blix said yesterday that Iraq was being much more cooperative.

I would also like to tell him that it is true that if Iraq contravenes resolution 1441, it runs the risk of severe retaliation. However—and this is where interpretation comes into play—the international community, with the exception of the United States and Great Britain, says that the UN remains seized of the matter and that we will now have to determine what kind of sanctions will be applied if there is a breach of resolution 1441.

For this reason, we support a second UN resolution. Before any military intervention, this UN resolution must explicitly give the international community the right to intervene militarily. Of course, it is important to remember that we also want a vote in the House.

Hon. Gar Knutson (Secretary of State (Central and Eastern Europe and Middle East), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to inform the House of important developments and advise it of Canada's position on Iraq.

• (1230)

[English]

I will be dividing my time with the government House leader. Furthermore, I will leave the procedural items to be dealt with by the House leader.

Over the past month, the international community, including Canada, has been undertaking increasingly intense diplomatic efforts to urge Iraq to meet its international obligations. These efforts have one important goal: to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction.

The Government of Canada has played an important role in these diplomatic efforts. Our Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs have been in constant contact with their counterparts around the world. It is clear that there is widespread consensus among our friends and allies that Iraq must disarm.

While we might not share exactly the same perspective on how this is to be achieved, there is general agreement on the need to maintain international pressure on Saddam's regime until Iraq fulfills its international obligations.

In the international community there is strong support for the United Nations process. We all recognize that the United Nations is the primary international organization responsible for peace and security. Canada continues to see the solution to the Iraq crisis based in resolution 1441 and through the UN Security Council.

The United Nations possesses the authority and is obliged to deal with this issue. That is why we will continue to urge our friends and allies that together we must pursue diplomatic efforts to disarm Iraq through this forum. This is the fundamental basis for our policy on Iraq.

[Translation]

With resolution 1441, the international community sent a clear message to the Iraqi regime. To ensure the pacific resolution of this situation, Iraq must cooperate fully, actively and unconditionally with the weapons inspectors.

[English]

Resolution 1441 gave the Government of Iraq one final chance to comply and it set out a detailed road map for doing so peacefully. Unfortunately the current reality is that Iraq continues to avoid

Supply

complying fully with UN resolution 1441. As Dr. Blix made clear during his update to the Security Council on January 27, Iraq has not co-operated fully and actively with the weapons inspectors as required.

United States Secretary of State Powell's presentation to the Security Council on February 5 put forward important factual information that added to the long list of outstanding questions regarding Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction. His presentation reinforced the concerns expressed by Dr. Blix and Dr. El Baradei in their reports of January 27.

This past weekend, Dr. Blix and Dr. El Baradei returned to Baghdad to meet with Iraq officials and to make clear to them once again that the onus is on Iraq to fill in the gaps and actively co-operate to provide the answers, information and co-operation required.

They will report back to the Security Council on February 14. This will be another important milestone in this process. Their findings will be invaluable to Security Council members as they consider the most appropriate way to proceed. The inspectors and the international community must see a concrete change in behaviour, from evasion to disclosure. Piecemeal co-operation is not enough and promises are not sufficient.

Clearly this process cannot be extended indefinitely. Inspections are not an open-ended process, and diplomatic pressure is increasing, but war is not inevitable if Iraq complies with the letter and the spirit of resolution 1441. The clear statement in resolution 1441 that there will be "serious consequences" has focused us all on the need for Iraq to co-operate. This credible threat of serious consequences from the international community has been essential to supporting the diplomatic effort to disarm Iraq.

Already resolution 1441 has made Iraq's obligations clear. It has permitted the return of the inspectors to Iraq and it has provided the necessary focus to get the job done. It sets out a detailed process for the council to receive reports and to consider appropriate actions, as well as the serious consequences of further non-compliance.

• (1235)

[Translation]

The first critical step is to cooperate fully, actively and openly with the international community in the disarmament process in resolution 1441.

[English]

It is up to the leadership of Iraq to do so and, in so doing, to bring their country in line with its international obligations for the good of its people as well as for the peace and security of the international community.

Canada's consistent policy on Iraq has served us well in terms of events and developments, from the passage of resolution 1441 to the reports of Dr. Blix and Dr. El Baradei to the council, to Colin Powell's case to that body on February 5 and to any possible second resolution on Iraq, the consistent thread is the UN process and the need for the international community to express its concerns through that body.

Supply

Not everyone fully agrees with the Government of Canada's approach on this issue, yet I would suggest to the House that the results are there. The U.S.A. has stayed within the UN process and the inspectors are doing their work in Iraq under its mandate. Should it be found that Iraq is unwilling to comply and co-operate with inspectors in its disarmament, then Canada will again look to the Security Council to consider next steps.

There was much compelling debate last week in the House and there is much discussion now of the possibility of a second resolution. It is ultimately up to the Security Council to determine whether it needs a second resolution. If there is a need to state clearly and unequivocally once again to Iraq the will of the international community, Canada would support such an approach.

The motion before the House, that we consider the sending of troops to Iraq by the government only after the Security Council has passed a resolution explicitly authorizing a military intervention, would unduly restrict the government's ability to respond to an extremely fluid and complex international situation. A great majority of Canadians agree with our fundamental position: The disarmament of Iraq by peaceful means is best achieved through the UN.

Canada continues to be actively engaged with its partners around the world in finding a solution to this rapidly evolving situation. We are in constant dialogue with the United States, other Security Council members and countries of Europe and the region. As I said earlier, war is not inevitable. We must do everything possible to achieve the peaceful disarmament of Iraq.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that was a ten minute exercise in begging the question and avoiding the resolution before the House, which is very clear in its intent. It asks whether the government would be prepared to decide to discharge Canadian Forces to Iraq for its failure to comply with a 17th United Nations Security Council resolution without the passage of an 18th resolution explicitly authorizing force. I would like the minister to clarify exactly where he stands.

Second, he says that the government's position is why there are inspectors operating in Iraq today. Let us be serious. The only reason there are inspectors in Iraq today, as Kofi Annan himself has said, is because of American military pressure and the credible threat of force. Why has Canada not joined its traditional allies, Australia, Great Britain and the United States, in exerting that kind of credible threat of force which has brought Iraq at least to the charade of inspections today?

Hon. Gar Knutson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. When he says it is begging the question, the position of the government is that we do not want to prejudge what facts may or may not be in play some weeks or some months down the road. If we look at the experience to date, when the United Nations has failed to do its job Canada has taken a certain position. There is no evidence in play right now that the United Nations is failing to do its job. That is why we are quite confident in saying that we are committed to the UN process.

What we do not want to do is get into a situation where our actions would be interpreted as trying to get ahead of the United Nations, or that the march to war is somehow not dependent on the will of the

international community but on how one country or one small group of countries views the situation.

We are committed to following through with the process that is in play with resolution 1441 and we are quite comfortable that this is the view of the majority of Canadians.

• (1240)

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, surely the member can understand the problem with this wishy-washy position Canada is being put in on the world stage and with our largest trading partner and our greatest long-time ally. The problem is that the message we send is not strong enough to be of any use in attempts to pressure Iraq and it panders to all the wrong things in its ambivalence.

The Canadian Alliance has already said in the motion we brought forward last week that we accept that the administration has the right to decide whether we are to go to war, if that unfortunately should ever come to reality. In return the government should ask the House for a vote on that to give a stamp of approval.

However, the motion today is asking the second question. Does the government really think it needs an explicit resolution, another resolution, from the United Nations or are resolution 1441 and the 16 that preceded it good enough not just to call Iraq's bluff but to take the action necessary to enforce some resolutions?

I would hope that the government would say that it does not know if war will be necessary, that it hopes it will not be, but if it comes to that we will make sure that the United Nations gets the respect it deserves and needs to have for credibility by standing with our allies to make sure the United Nations resolutions are enforced.

I was down in Washington, D.C. this last week and I heard person after person say that the position of the Canadian government is just not understandable or credible down in the States. They just do not understand why we are straddling the fence, why we are not being any help in pressuring Saddam Hussein and why we are not sending any clear messages to our strong, long-time ally that we are going to be there to do our part to pressure the Hussein regime into accepting what we all want, which is demilitarization and a regime change.

Hon. Gar Knutson: Mr. Speaker, I think our position is somewhat what the hon. member has stated. The Prime Minister has said in response to questions in the House, and I quote from memory, that while a second resolution is not legally necessary we think that resolution 1441 as it stands is enough and it would be preferable. The reason it would be preferable is that it would represent complete unity of purpose among the Security Council members and a stronger unifying force for the international community. So while we are not wedded to it, it is not something that we want to discount out of hand as not being necessary, because we think it would be preferable.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part again in the debate on an opposition motion on Iraq. I think it is important to listen carefully to the wording of this motion, which reads as follows:

That this House consider the sending of troops to Iraq by the government only after the United Nations Security Council has passed a resolution explicitly authorizing a military intervention in Iraq.

I will come back to the wording later, because there is something wrong with it, to say the least.

I will begin by reminding the House that since our government took office in 1993—we all remember this happy day—we have honoured the commitment made that same year in our red book, when we said, and I quote:

A Liberal government will also expand the rights of Parliament to debate major Canadian foreign policy initiatives, such as the deployment of peacekeeping forces—

The opposition keeps suggesting mistakenly that this House has not looked into the Iraq issue. That is just plain wrong. And to say that a vote is in any way necessary, because of some past practices, has no basis in terms of current House practices.

● (1245)

[*English*]

Some opposition members claim that past precedents show us that only Parliament decides to commit Canadian forces to active service overseas. Of course that is not the case. Even last Thursday's motion which still remains to be voted on does not make that request and it came from another opposition party.

As I indicated in the House on February 6, Parliament's role in considering the sending of troops for offensive deployment or peacekeeping was not consistent before 1993. There were about eight different ways of doing it. Only since 1993, thanks to the initiative of our Prime Minister, do we have the very consistent way that we have now.

Involvement of Parliament in the decision making process before 1993 looked something like this. There was no consultation at any time in the case of the Korean conflict. There was a debate and a vote after the Canadian forces were sent in the case of the gulf war in 1990-91. There was a full debate and a vote in the House before a formal commitment was made in other cases and a debate with no vote in other cases. In other cases there was a vote on the estimates without a debate, and so on and so forth. There was never a consistent way.

Since 1993 the government has met its red book commitment, as it has of course with most other red book commitments, that is to say, to engage Parliament on international issues, including before Canadian forces are sent.

I personally consulted with House officers on several occasions about this in the past. I reached them at home or elsewhere when the House was not sitting so we could do things to consult Parliament. We used the procedure of take note debates to give all members the opportunity to express their views and their concerns. The government has used other mechanisms to engage Parliament once Canadian forces have been involved abroad, such as having the

Supply

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of National Defence appear before the standing committee if Parliament was not in session. Things like that have been done in order to keep Parliament fully involved.

Let us compare our approach with that of other countries. Members sometimes go to great lengths to do that. Our approach with the Iraq situation to date has been consistent with the approach taken by many other Commonwealth nations.

For instance, the Australian house of representatives began, guess what, a take note debate on the Iraq situation, but there has been no vote by the Australian house. The British house has had a number of debates on the subject but no vote, nor has the British Prime Minister stated that there would be a vote. Indeed, in the U.K. as in Canada, there is no requirement to do so. We are all familiar with how our Constitution works.

An hon. member: What about the United States?

Hon Don Boudria: The hon. member said that they do it in the United States. I do not apologize for having a different kind of government.

Perhaps the Bloc motion before us today could sound attractive to some on first reading. However, a closer examination shows that the motion actually reduces the role of the House and denies members of Parliament the right to discuss the Iraq situation if certain conditions are met.

The motion says that the House can only consider the sending of troops to Iraq after a UN resolution authorizing military intervention has been passed. Unless there is a UN resolution, the government is not prevented from sending troops. It could send troops without a UN resolution but would be forbidden to debate it in the House until there is a UN resolution, if there ever is one. Those terms will not even expire under the motion. It limits members debating a unilateral decision.

● (1250)

Let us say there was a unilateral decision to send our troops to war, Canada and the United States together, or Canada alone as it does not matter for the purpose of the argument. I hope of course we have neither but it would mean that could be done, but we could not debate it if we passed the motion.

[*Translation*]

Let us reread the wording of the motion more carefully:

That this House consider the sending of troops to Iraq by the government only after the United Nations Security Council has passed a resolution explicitly authorizing a military intervention in Iraq.

Perhaps what the hon. member meant was “that the government consider only after UN approval”. He is free to propose this, but I would not agree. Nevertheless, in terms of logic, I think it would work. He could have said, “That the government consider only after UN approval—” or “That the government consider only after UN authorization, on the recommendation of the House of Commons—”.

Supply

I am not saying I would be in agreement with the motion, but at least its wording would be more logical. What we have before us at present calls for the following: In the event that Canada should support the United States in a military intervention without the support of the UN, the government would, as it is of course constitutionally empowered to, be totally authorized to participate, but it would be absolutely forbidden to discuss this in the House.

I am re-reading the motion and I invite all members to do the same. I do not understand why people want to impose a ban when we read, "That this House consider the sending of troops—". Not that the government should not send troops, but that we are considering the matter or, in other words, that we are talking about it. The motion goes on to say, "—to Iraq by the government only after the United Nations Security Council has passed a resolution—".

As it now stands, the motion does not prevent military participation with or without the UN, it does not prevent the government from acting with or without the UN but, under certain conditions, it would prevent the House from debating it.

I do not know what the hon. member intended. I can speculate but, as it now stands, this motion almost directly opposes the amendment proposed last week by the Bloc Québécois to the Canadian Alliance's motion. That motion said that if a decision were made, with or without the UN, Parliament must be recalled immediately to debate the question. In the motion before us, if a decision is made, if the UN has not made a decision in this respect, we cannot debate it. In other words, if we adopt this motion, debate would be prohibited. However, by adopting the Canadian Alliance's motion, with the Bloc Québécois' amendment, the debate would be authorized again five minutes later.

So the wording is faulty. We have a practice in this House, and it should be respected. I talked about it last week and I encourage, once again, all my hon. colleagues to vote against the motion before us, the Bloc Québécois' amendment from last Thursday and, of course, the main motion proposed by the Canadian Alliance last Thursday. All three motions should be defeated for all the reasons I mentioned today and last week.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, rarely have we seen an intellectual mishmash that is so unpalatable, incoherent and, ultimately, stupid as the comments made by the House leader. To make fun of one the most serious concerns of our fellow citizens is truly to act in bad faith.

Those who listened to the government House leader can see his contempt for this institution.

Our proposal reflects what we have been saying since the House resumed sitting in January, that is we want a vote. If the government House leader has so little respect for his duties that he thinks it is unimportant that parliamentarians in this House rise and vote on the sending of troops, then there is something that he does not understand about his responsibilities.

The way that he made fun of an extremely important motion reflects a cavalier attitude. What argument does the government House leader have against the proposal whereby, should the UN decide, in a multilateral context, to send troops to Iraq, and should Canada be asked to participate, we should have a vote in the House?

If the government House leader does not have anything better to say than to use irony and make fun of such a serious issue, then he is not worthy of his position.

• (1255)

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, if I have upset the member on the other side of the House, that is his problem. The fact remains that what he thinks he would like to vote on is not found in the motion that was moved and that is not my fault. The potential war in Iraq is important, I acknowledge that. I myself asked to consult with the other parliamentary leaders. We had a take note debate on this matter and I offered to hold a second debate. No other party in the House wanted this.

I thought that this issue was important, but the issue before us today is whether maintaining peace is important. The member can re-read my speech from last Thursday when I talked about this at length. That is not what is before us today. What we are talking about today is that the House will only consider sending troops to Iraq after a UN resolution. That means that if there is no UN resolution, there is no action to be taken. There would even be a ban on debating it in this House. That is what he does not understand and undoubtedly is not what he meant to say.

Nevertheless, that said, the Prime Minister said the following in the House last week.

In the event of military intervention and further to the request of the official opposition last week, the Prime Minister will allow on the first sitting day following a possible deployment—if there is one, but we all hope there will not be—an opposition day with a vote so that the opposition party for whom the day is designated may choose the theme it wants, presumably Iraq. Obviously it is not up to the government to choose the theme for an opposition day.

This was already said and repeated. I repeated this on Friday and the Prime Minister said it on Thursday. I talked about it myself afterward. It is all true, but it has nothing to do with the motion before us today. It is not at all the same. The motion does not say "A vote is called for if troops are deployed".

I invite the member to consult what is in front of him. The motion does not say that.

[English]

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I do think that when troops are deployed people need to think through the proper order as to what the government should be obligated to do.

I brought forward a private member's bill quite a few years ago which basically urged the government to follow the gist of our own Alliance motion on which we will be voting soon. The government knows the urgency of the situation. It knows that in an emergency the House may not be sitting and it may have to deploy troops. However, upon that deployment, the government should immediately call the House back and we should have a vote on it.

Will the government House leader support the Alliance motion which asks for that? We all hope there will not be a war and that our troops will never be engaged in battle but, if that were to happen, would he support the Alliance motion later on?

Supply

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has brought forward a very important subject. No, I will not support the Alliance motion because it does not do that either.

Last week in the House of Commons the chief whip of the Alliance Party asked, should there be a deployment, whether the Prime Minister would immediately permit the next sitting day of Parliament to be an opposition day so it could choose a topic, presumably on the topic of deployment. However neither the Prime Minister nor I as House leader choose which party has the opposition day so I cannot say it would be the official opposition. It would be nice to have that authority but that is not the way parliamentary procedure works.

In any case, coming back to the essential point, the Prime Minister said yes to that request. The chief opposition whip said that he would withdraw his motion but to this date has failed to do so.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion. I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

The motion put before us today by the Bloc Québécois reads:

That this House consider the sending of troops to Iraq by the government only after the United Nations Security Council has passed a resolution explicitly authorizing a military intervention in Iraq.

We in the official opposition are opposed to the motion because we think its intent is not founded on the facts. The fact is that many people engaged in this debate seem not to have read the operative resolution to which we all refer, UN Security Council resolution 1441, which was passed under the authority of chapter 7 of the United Nations charter last November, and which quite clearly provides the authority of the United Nations for military intervention. I will outline the reasons that is very clear. I wish that more people, instead of talking about resolution 1441, would actually read it because it is quite clear.

First, let us recall the history of this. This matter did not begin in September of last year with President Bush's address to the United Nations General Assembly. It did not begin in November with the passage of resolution 1441. Rather, the chain of events, which has brought us to this difficult moment, began in 1990 with Iraq's deliberate violation of world security through its invasion of the peaceful neighbouring country of Kuwait.

I will lead the House through all the resolutions so the intent of resolution 1441 will be clear.

At that time the United Nations Security Council seized itself of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, its possession and development of weapons of mass destruction, and its systematic violation of human rights, and passed a number of resolutions, the first among them being resolution 1660. Essentially, resolution 1660 required Iraq to remove itself from Kuwait, to suspend its weapons of mass destruction program, to cease co-operating with terrorist organizations, and to comply with the United Nations standards on human rights.

Iraq, of course, failed to do so and, after several UN resolutions were passed explicitly authorizing military intervention to expel Iraq from Kuwait, a ceasefire followed the gulf war. This is very

important. We hear a lot of members in this place throw around terms like international law without, apparently, understanding the first principles of the matter before us. This was not a peace treaty. This was not a completion of a war. It was a cessation of military action authorized explicitly by the United Nations Security Council.

I remind the House that Canada had a seat at the Security Council at the time these operative resolutions were passed. Iraq undertook certain covenants in that ceasefire, among which were undertakings to destroy all its stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction and to permit United Nations inspectors from UNMOVIC and the IAEA to verify their destruction. It was not to find their weapons, not to go on a hide and seek operation in a country the size of British Columbia, not to play a cat and mouse game with the Iraqi regime for 12 years, but to immediately verify the destruction of its stockpiles of WMD. This was not in 2002, but in 1991 under resolution 678 of the United Nations Security Council.

A further point is that this resolution was passed under chapter 7 of the UN charter. Chapter 7 deals explicitly with threats to peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression. It is the ultimate authority under which the UN Security Council can act. When dealing with resolutions under chapter 7, one is explicitly dealing with questions of military force.

• (1300)

Chapter 7 resolutions are not good intention resolutions. They are not pleas for good behaviour. They are, clearly and legally, the ultimate authority that the UN can use to threaten the use of force to require compliance of a recalcitrant nation that is threatening the peace of the world.

I mention all this because resolution 1441, which the government says is the basis of its policy, explicitly recalls the United Nations Security Council resolutions 660, 678 and so on. It states that the United Nations is now determined:

—to ensure full and immediate compliance by Iraq without conditions or restrictions with its obligations under resolution 687... and other relevant resolutions and recalling that the resolutions of the Council constitute the governing standard of Iraqi compliance....

Resolution 1441 also states that “the Government of Iraq has failed to comply with its commitments pursuant to resolution 687 with regard to terrorism” and destruction of “weapons of mass destruction”, and recalls in resolution 687:

—the Council declared that a ceasefire would be based on acceptance by Iraq of the provisions of that resolution, including the obligations on Iraq contained therein....

Let me quote resolution 1441 for absolute clarity and emphasis. The United Nations Security Council unanimously stated:

Recalling that in its resolution 687 (1991) the Council declared that a ceasefire would be based on acceptance by Iraq of the provisions of that resolution....

Supply

After 12 years it is clear to anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear that Iraq has not legally complied with its obligations under resolution 687 under the ceasefire. We hear people throwing around terms in international law but legally there is still a state of war with Iraq in which Canada was engaged. Legally we continue to be at a state of war with Iraq. The legal instrument that suspended hostilities in 1991 was a ceasefire and that ceasefire was contingent, as resolution 1441 tells us, on Iraq's compliance to destroying its weapons of mass destruction and the verified destruction of those weapons.

I will repeat that again and again because that is the central fact of the debate which some seem to have lost sight of.

Resolution 1441 goes on to say, notwithstanding the other 16 resolutions that have been passed over the past 12 years, notwithstanding 12 years of diplomatic efforts and notwithstanding repeated efforts to have Iraq comply with the inspections regime. Let me parenthetically add that sometimes people here say that it was the United Nations that withdrew the inspectors in 1998. That is not true. They should read resolution 1441. It says explicitly that ultimately it was Iraq that ceased all co-operation with UNSCOM and the IAEA in 1998.

After recalling all these legal obligations on Iraq and recalling that we are still legally in a state of war under resolutions 660 and 675, it states that further non-compliance, further material breaches will constitute further cause for serious consequences.

When the UN Security Council speaks of serious consequences, it is not talking about lectures from the Prime Minister of Canada. It is not talking about yet more sanctions, which punish the people of Iraq because of their misapplication through Saddam Hussein's brutality. We are not talking about sending Barney the purple dinosaur over there or the member for Vancouver East to engage in weapons inspections with the United States. Clearly the United Nations Security Council is contemplating what is implicit in chapter 7 of the charter, namely the use of force.

Let me say that the members of the official opposition hope that force can be avoided but, from our study of history and our understanding of reality, we know that the best way to avoid a war in Iraq today is through a credible threat of force.

● (1305)

We believe Canada has an obligation to participate in such a credible threat of force, along with its traditional allies. We believe it is preferable that there is a 17th resolution passed, not just a 2nd one, making even more explicit what is clear in resolution 1441. However if that is not the case, we believe that there are sufficient legal grounds for the Government of Canada to act in accordance with its allies in a multilateral coalition to ensure international security is maintained.

● (1310)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): I heard the hon. member, who was asking whether the members had indeed read resolution 1441. I certainly have. He referred to a series of resolutions Iraq had not complied with. I agree, but there have

been UN resolutions about a number of countries. I will mention only Israel, which has not complied with a goodly number of them.

I would like to ask him whether he is aware of the reaction of France, which differs from his reaction, the reaction of Germany, Russia, Mexico, Chile, Pakistan, and many others. Public opinion in a number of countries, including the U.K. and Canada, is evidence that there is opposition to an intervention without another UN intervention. Is he aware of this?

What I would like is not just his opinion, but what he thinks of the current international reaction, even in the U.S., where there appears to be a shift in public opinion. I would like his opinion on this.

[*English*]

Mr. Jason Kenney: I think there were two points, Mr. Speaker. With respect to United Nations resolutions on Israel, the member should know that the vast majority of such resolutions are passed by the general assembly, not the Security Council, a general assembly with some 25 Arab countries and some 40 predominantly Muslim countries, many of them totalitarian regimes explicitly dedicated to Israel's destruction. That is why general assembly resolutions carry neither legal nor moral weight in this respect. Further, the two UN Security Council resolutions on Israel, resolutions 242 and 338 which come under chapter 5 of the UN charter, deal with the "Pacific resolution of disputes", and place obligations on both parties for a negotiated settlement. There is not a unilateral obligation on Israel.

Second, with respect to what the member calls a growing sense of international sentiments, he is absolutely right. There is a growing sense from 19 leaders of sovereign countries in Europe who have said that a second resolution is not necessary for force to be used to compel Iraq's compliance. I will quote briefly from the joint statement by the leaders of Italy, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Denmark, Spain and Portugal. It states:

The U.N. Charter charges the Security Council with the task of preserving international peace and security. To do so, the Security Council must maintain its credibility by ensuring full compliance with its resolutions. We cannot allow a dictator to systematically violate those resolutions. If they are not complied with, the Security Council will lose its credibility and world peace will suffer as a result...

We stand with the growing number of allies who share that sentiment.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague from Calgary, who has given a great speech and great responses to the questions, to comment on this.

The Bloc Québécois fancies itself as the political party in Canada which is expert in the concept of sovereignty. Could he comment on this motion which asks the Canadian government to delegate its sovereignty to the United Nations?

Mr. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the member raises an interesting point. The Bloc is concerned about sovereignty and Canada is a sovereign nation. We must act in our interests and, yes, according to our international obligations. I think we can do so in this case. We can support symbolically and practically the use of the credible threat of force and ultimately the use of force, with or without a 17th UN resolution, and we can do so while respecting our sovereignty.

Supply

[*Translation*]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yes, we are sovereignists, but I would ask the hon. member, "What about Canadian sovereignty?" As a result of the way the government is acting right now, we are losing our Canadian sovereignty, because we are going along with what the Americans want. I want to hear his opinion on this.

[*English*]

Mr. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, again, the legal exercise of sovereignty this nation can discharge in its national interest and preferably in accordance with international norms. However, the notion that Canada or any other democratic nation is limited in what it can do in its national interest and to protect international security by the whim of one country with a veto on the security Council, like that moral giant of China, like the Republic of France, the risible policy of the president of France, which has more national economic interest at stake in Iraq than any other country, is ridiculous. To suggest that any one of those countries, like the People's Republic of China, should be able to dictate foreign policy to Canada, I and most democratic Canadians would say that is ridiculous.

• (1315)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois for bringing forward this motion regarding Canada's participation in a war against international terrorism and Canada's role in this war, with or without United Nations sanctions.

It is truly fortunate that Canada has a vigorous official opposition. Unlike areas of jurisdiction that the federal government has no constitutional role to play, foreign affairs is something that should come up for regular debate in the House. While the federal government may be afraid to engage in democratic discourse, we on this side of the House are not. We demonstrated that fact last Thursday and we will continue in the debate today.

What is really disturbing is to hear the anti-American jingoism that passes for Canadian foreign policy, which we hear much too often from the government benches. By the same measure, attempts by government members to suggest that we in the Canadian Alliance stand for anything less than a strong and independent Canada demonstrates just how shallow government foreign policy has become.

I first want to deal with several issues that arose from last Thursday's debate. The support the Canadian Alliance has for our largest trading partner with whom we share a common heritage of language, culture and geography is not an act of submission. It is a clear recognition that the ties that bind us are stronger than any issues that divide us.

Our decision to support the United States is not a rejection of the United Nations or the goals and values that led to the founding of that institution. What we are prepared to recognize in the official opposition is that the decision to take decisive action in Iraq could be beyond the scope of which the UN is capable under the circumstances. We are also prepared to recognize that our decision to stand with our allies, Great Britain, Australia and the United States, is the right decision.

The next issue I want to deal with is the assumption that negotiating from a position of strength, which is what Canada would be doing in supporting our allies, is somehow the wrong way to negotiate. I also add to this assumption, on the part of some members of the House, that support for our allies will automatically or inevitably lead to war. A united front is designed to prevent war. Only by being strong together can we see Saddam Hussein being forced to comply with our request to destroy his weapons of mass destruction.

Let us move to the purpose of today's motion. It is time for the government to get off the fence and declare its intentions. The most appropriate way to do this is to bring forward a motion and put it to a vote in the House before any Canadian soldiers are asked to put their lives on the line for this country.

There are other ways to prevent this war. News reports in the Middle East say that Saudi Arabia and others have made overtures to Iraq about a plan whereby Saddam and his cohorts would go into exile. However Saddam insists that he will stay in Iraq and fight a war.

• (1320)

French President Chirac and German Chancellor Schroeder announced on January 22 that both countries would vote against any UN resolution for war against Iraq and that they would oppose any U.S.-led action. By coincidence, France and Russia, both veto bearing permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, have made oil deals with Iraq. These oil deals blatantly contravene the UN resolutions. On one hand they are asking that we go by the UN, yet in their own backrooms, they are making deals that defy resolutions that have already been passed. Syria has also. It is a known state sponsor of terrorism and is an ally of Iraq. It is also a temporary member of the Security Council.

The UN meekly accepted the eviction of UN weapons inspectors in 1998. The oil for food program has not been affected by Hussein's belligerence. Flagrant violations have gone unpunished for years. Is it any wonder that he continues to thumb his nose, even at resolution 1441?

The UN failed to act in Rwanda, East Timor, Kosovo. Thousands upon thousands of civilians were massacred. Children, torn by the arm out of school, were hacked to pieces. They were waiting for the UN to act. They were too late for those people.

The future of the UN itself is at risk if it fails to act on Iraq. UN authorization to confront Saddam is already in place. My colleague from Calgary explained that. There was never an armistice to end the gulf war, only a ceasefire. Iraq's continued violation of the ceasefire's disarmament resolution means that the ceasefire no longer exists.

Canada must work with our allies to disarm the Iraqi rogue regime. We must work together with our allies to ensure that the UN resolutions are enforced. The Liberal government is divided and confused about Canada's position on potential military intervention in Iraq. The UN must enforce its resolutions to preserve the influence it still has and its credibility as a body that ensures safety and security.

Supply

The Prime Minister has stated that there will be no vote in Parliament on whether Canada goes to war, before an executive decision is given or after. He says that decision is his and his alone to make. I think all my constituents who have written to me on this issue just this past weekend, many veterans, many survivors of World War II, have told me that they are not too old and that they have seen this all before. They saw another madman 60 years ago who did the same thing. At that time, it was the United States that was unwilling to get involved. It was only after its own people were struck at Pearl Harbor did it decide that it was important to stop the tyrant and all the other wars combined in that great war.

• (1325)

Let us hope that the Prime Minister is not waiting for an attack directly on our soil to state his position clearly. The government has one motive, and one motive only; that is, to get re-elected. To get re-elected it likes to go with the flow. It gauges that by looking at the polls and the polls are closing in. More Canadians are recognizing that to stop Saddam, the threat of war is inevitable.

However, we cannot wait forever. We must show our unity and be a part of a strong, unified front threatening Saddam. Then, and only then, will he abide by the United Nations resolution and give up his weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the speech from this fine member from Ontario.

I lived the first half of my life in the United States and I hope at least three-quarters of the rest of my life will be lived in Canada; although I cannot be too sure of that. I love these countries, both of them, with a great deal of compassion.

The member knows, as do many others, that I have a very personal interest in what is happening in this possible conflict and the possibility of a severe loss.

When I think of what is trying to be achieved by a group of men and women who are now on the borders, who understand the future security of their children and grandchildren and the nations at large, this event very well could be the turning point to bring long term peace and security to the world. It is their goal to do that.

In order to accomplish that we need to stand together. Those who do not want war and those who want peace should stand together in a show of strength against the tyrants who have demonstrated over and over again that they have no compassion for human life. That is what is so important about these two countries being so united in their stand for world peace. A show of strength is essential. The game that President Bush refers to, I believe, is a game of Saddam playing some countries against others by keeping them divided on this issue.

Everybody is for peace, but how do we obtain it? It has been stated loud and clear that a coalition of allies would be the loudest and strongest message that Saddam Hussein could ever understand. Does the hon. member agree with that?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I am familiar with the potential loss of which the member for Wild Rose speaks. Even though the member stands to lose his own son, his son knows that by putting his life on the line he could be saving millions of others in his own country and in the entire continent of North America.

The member stated that this tyrant has no compassion for human life. Nothing could be more clear in the way the women of Iraq are treated. On a whim, a husband can have his wife put to death. All he has to do is accuse her of adultery and her fate is sealed. To get the adults to comply with his politics, children routinely are raped and tortured in front of their family members or their parents.

We waited for the UN to respond in Kosovo. The houses in Kosovo were all made out of brick. The only wooden part of these houses was the door. These tyrants would take these children and nail them to the doors. They literally crucified the toddlers. Other infants were just thrown on fires. We must absolutely stand with our allies and stop this brutality dead in its tracks.

• (1330)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this extremely important debate of a motion that has been brought forward by one of my colleagues in the Bloc Quebecois.

The motion states:

That this House consider the sending of troops to Iraq by the government only after the United Nations Security Council has passed a resolution explicitly authorizing a military intervention in Iraq.

I want to congratulate the Bloc for bringing forward the motion today. I do so for a couple of reasons. First, it pierces the absurdity of the arrogance of the position that has been articulated by the Liberal House leader again this morning, but also proclaimed by the Prime Minister following a debate on Thursday. They stated that as a result of the debate that took place on Thursday on the question of a vote in the House, that the Liberal government has somehow endorsed and authorized a vote in the House on the question of any participation by Canada in a war against Iraq.

Unless I am missing something, and perhaps you as Speaker can correct my understanding of procedures in the House, the Prime Minister, or the Liberal government House leader, could not prevent a vote in the House on this question if an opposition party, on its opposition day, chose to assign as the business of the day such a vote. It seems to me ridiculous to keep hearing this assertion from government members that now their Prime Minister has had the foresight and courage to allow something to take place in the House, namely a vote on this issue, if an opposition party on its opposition day brings forward such a motion. It is important to dispel the nonsense surrounding the rhetoric coming from the government benches.

The second and far more important thing is that the motion that is before us is based on a rejection of the notion that Canada's participation in a war in Iraq is somehow inevitable. One of the things that is of great concern to Canadians today, increasingly so, is the notion that somehow a war in Iraq is inevitable, unstoppable, and that the U.S. will do it no matter what, come hell or high water, and that somehow Canada had better grow up, get over it, and sign on. That is not only distressing to increasing numbers of Canadians, it is also, in my view and the view of my party, extremely dangerous and we need to be clear about that. The motion that is here today gives us an opportunity to express the opposition to that notion of inevitability and inalterability by supporting the motion.

I want to take a moment before I address the motion itself to say a bit about the context in which this debate is taking place. I was struck over the weekend by an article in the *New York Times*, by a well known commentator Maureen Dowd, entitled "Desert Spring, Sprung". It struck me as really important to take note of a fact she cited. I am assuming it was accurate, or at least I am prepared to acknowledge that there must be some solid basis for the assertion. A CNN poll taken recently showed that 82% of Americans think going to war with Iraq would provide another terrorist attack on the U.S. as opposed to 13% of Americans who think it would prevent one.

Shocking as that statistic is there is buried within it an important ray of hope, because if it is indeed true that 82% of Americans actually believe that launching an attack on Iraq would result in terrorist attacks on the U.S., as opposed to 13% who think it would be a preventative action, it gives us a glimpse of how many Americans share with the growing numbers of Canadians and people around the world the belief that this war can and must be stopped and that we need to work together to find alternatives to any attack on Iraq.

• (1335)

Second, with respect to the context, in spite of the fact that increasing numbers of Americans are expressing alarm at where their country is headed, at where the George Bush administration is aiming to take them, there are today 113,000 American troops amassed along the Iraqi border and another 37,000 on their way. The U.S. has a fleet of aircraft carriers, F-18 fighter jets and Stealth bombers, forming, as Michael Harris stated in the *Ottawa Sun* over the weekend, "the most formidable fighting force the world has ever seen".

I think there is a third bit of context for this important debate. It is one that also gives hope to those in this world who cannot conceive of charging ahead with a war in Iraq when alternatives to war exist. Despite Colin Powell's presentation on Thursday to the UN Security Council, which I do not know whether to call a performance or presentation, all I know is that it was not solid evidence, among the 15 members of the Security Council, only 4 have publicly stated their endorsement of the position put forward by Colin Powell, namely Britain, Spain, Bulgaria and Chile.

Why do I say that is a basis for hope? Because I think what it indicates is that there is a growing body of public opinion that says no to war in Iraq, that says no, it is not inevitable, and yes, there are alternatives to war. On previous occasions in a debate in the House I had the opportunity to make reference to some really excellent work done and published in a paper, "Alternatives to War with Iraq", coming from an expert panel that was assembled here in Ottawa in mid-December. Those who have not read it should seek it out and give it the careful attention it deserves.

It is not only thoughtful, expert Canadians who are giving consideration to these matters. I think we should be glad to know that over the weekend France and Germany put forward what they see as an alternative to this notion of the inevitability of moving with the U.S. to an early declaration of war.

I am not in a position to say at this point that the details of the proposal that have been set out are absolutely feasible, but what I do say is that kudos should go to France and Germany for putting

Supply

forward alternatives, for asking the world to consider why it is the sensible course of action to recognize that the deployment of troops to maintain pressure on the Iraqi regime is worth considering, that the assignment of a permanent UN coordinator for disarmament to Iraq is worthy of consideration, and that a UN court for dealing with infractions and human rights abuses that rear their ugly head in Iraq is worth considering. Yes, let us all be realistic that such ugly abuses and atrocities are happening in Iraq as we speak, not in Iraq alone but in Iraq and in other countries that also cause concern to the international community. And yes, UN inspectors could be bolstered by a UN force several thousand strong to keep the pressure on.

• (1340)

As I say, at least there are thoughtful commentators, researchers and academics, there are military experts and, yes, there are democratic nations addressing the question of what kind of alternatives to war there are. Let Canada decide to be among those nations that are serious about committing to a path to peace.

What are we hearing from Canada? Over the weekend, I think that a lot of Canadians considered it an embarrassment to have our foreign affairs minister applauding Colin Powell for the convincing evidence he had put forward at the very same time that revelations were swirling around the world that the so-called intelligence dossier putting forward this supposedly persuasive evidence in fact contained plagiarized material, which not only was presented a year and a half ago but was based on a student paper that used 12 year old material. It was cited by Colin Powell as important documentation brought forward by the British. I do not know how we can be among those nations that say not only is that solid evidence but it is sufficient justification for us to contemplate the notion that Canada should join in a war in Iraq when there are alternatives, when there are other options to be pursued.

I went home on the weekend very discouraged. I am sure I am not alone in this, because I am sure members on the government benches would say so as well if they were free to say so publicly. I was very discouraged by the events of last week. I was very daunted by the challenge of what in the name of heaven we can do to try to avert this war.

I was quite delighted to open a copy of the *Halifax Daily News*, from my own riding, shortly after I got off the plane and read an article by a highly respected author, writer and poet, a creative thinker by the name of Lesley Choyce, a former American, in fact, now a Canadian citizen. In that article he touched upon one of those simple, concrete, sensible notions, one that I think is worthy of consideration by every single Canadian.

In that article he expressed his concern about the notion of war being inevitable, of it being the only option. Then he suggested such a simple idea but one that I think is worthy of every single one of us in the House embracing, and that is, recognizing that we are indeed the closest friends of and neighbours to the Americans, and that therefore means that there is not one among us who does not have family or friends in the U.S. He suggested, and I think he is right about this, that it would not matter if every single Canadian called George Bush or Colin Powell and said, "We plead with you to consider the alternatives to war", because it still would not amount to a hill of beans.

Supply

However, he went on to ask why every Canadian who wants to avert that war does not pick up the phone or fire off a message on their e-mail to their friends and relatives in the U.S. and respectfully say to them, "We are pleading with you to have more faith in your own democratic potential and your own democratic ideals, so we want to talk to you about why we think there are alternatives and why we think the human catastrophe that is going to unfold is simply unthinkable". Then, as he said, if we receive even a glimmer of support for the alternatives to war, we should encourage our friends or relatives in the U.S. to pick up their phones and register their views with their local senators or local congressmen.

• (1345)

It does not amount to a solution, but let me relate very briefly what happened when I said that was not a bad idea. I spent a good deal of time yesterday making exactly those kinds of phone calls and sending those e-mails. I want to describe briefly what happened. I was thrilled at what happened, because what I received in response was a lot of information that we are not getting here in Ottawa where we think we are concerned enough about this issue to know what is going on.

I learned about the alternatives to war that Jimmy Carter has outlined in considerable detail. I learned about the Patriots for Peace, an organization that started up in Vermont and is gathering considerable momentum, with people taking simple actions to display their opposition to the war on Iraq. I already have had the pleasure of being introduced to representatives of the military families who speak out, who have sons and daughters already deployed in the Persian Gulf being prepared for battle, and who are standing up and saying, "We are not in agreement with this war and we are pleading with our neighbours and friends to share their views, which we know they share with us, and make them known to their representatives".

Then I received some information, which I thought was very encouraging, about 39 Congress members who have been very strenuous in increasingly trying to put the pressure on the Bush administration to back away from this notion that a war is somehow the only alternative and that it is inevitable. It is a letter that was signed by 39 Congress members. It is dated January 29. Let me quote briefly from it. It states:

Over the past several months we have received a huge amount of correspondence from our constituents who believe that the crisis in Iraq can be resolved without bloodshed. They believe, as we do, that a "preemptive" attack on Iraq will result in a massive increase in anti-Americanism throughout the world, and will make our country less safe from terrorist attacks, not more safe.

They are 39 American congressmen who put this point of view forward to the American president and said, "We want to sit down and talk to you about this". They went on to state:

Our constituents are concerned that if the United States ignores... international law, we will help create a climate bordering on international anarchy and a mind-set in which all nations will feel freer to attack other nations for whatever reason. In a world where at least eight countries have nuclear weapons, this is not a good idea. Under those conditions, what moral authority will the United States have in calling for peace and negotiations in the Middle East or between India and Pakistan, or China and Taiwan?

They went on to state:

—many people in our districts are extremely fearful about the costs associated with a war in Iraq and the ensuing occupation. At a time when we have a growing deficit and you [President Bush] are proposing cut-backs in veterans' needs,

Medicare, education and environmental protection, a war with Iraq could cost over \$100 billion and increase both the suffering of the present generation and the financial liabilities of future generations.

These are excerpts from a letter that I think is very significant, because we are not hearing this. In fact, I think what we generally hear is that the American elected officials are of one view, which is "Straight ahead, George Bush, we are on board".

Finally, I thought it was very significant that U.S. representative Jim Oberstar, a veteran of I think almost 30 years in the American Congress, has actually issued a statement in which he has made it clear that he personally is withdrawing the support that he gave at an earlier date for the expropriation of funds to launch that war in Iraq. He is introducing a bill and encouraging his colleagues to support that bill cancelling out that appropriation of funds.

• (1350)

It is time for us in the House to speak with one voice, a voice in support of concrete, practical steps that can be taken to avert that war. We must make it clear that Canada wants to be among the peace builders and the peace seekers, not simply to tag on to an American declaration of war in Iraq.

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the member for Halifax for her speech and her approach. This is not the first time I have heard her speak on such issues. It is not that she is a woman, but her comments are ones that we often hear from women. As a man, I am very open to this approach, which seeks to explore every opportunity to avoid war, rather than the usual, traditional approach, which involves demonstrating terrible force in an attempt to force one's opponent to back down.

Like the member for Halifax, I was in my riding this weekend. I felt that the vast majority of people would like to do something. Of course, there are demonstrations, but the member provided a fairly accurate picture of public opinion. She even used newspaper articles, studies, and so on.

People said to me, "If we are going to send an e-mail, it sure will not be to President Bush or Mr. Powell, because they will just ignore it".

What does the member for Halifax think would be the best way for people from my riding, and others, to express their opposition to a warpath approach, and a way that would be effective?

[English]

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Speaker, there are a variety of ways in which Canadians are now making their voices heard.

The thrust of the argument which Lesley Choyce, the Nova Scotian and former American, put forward this weekend was that every single person who has contacts, whether they be political colleagues, personal friends, family members, or students with whom one may have gone to school, should be urging them to make their opposition to a war in Iraq known to their elected officials.

There is a lot of evidence that people increasingly are saying that they really do not expect that their politicians will do anything about this. That is very worrisome. Not only is that very condemning of what it is we all think we are doing here, it is very dangerous if we think about the responsibility of government virtually being abandoned by the citizenry because they do not believe that their elected representatives and their leaders actually are going to take a stand in the face of something as horrifying as launching a war in Iraq.

I found a further source of encouragement on the weekend. I do not know this gentleman, Leonard Friesen, who is the chair of the global studies program at Sir Wilfrid Laurier. In the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, he spoke about the fact that there are more people searching for an alternative to the escalating spiral of militarized madness. He went on to remind us—and it is important for us to remind our American friends, family members and colleagues of this—that \$400 billion U.S. is spent on the military on an annual basis, making it by far the most militarized state on the planet.

Just think for a moment about what it means. The so-called security assistance that is being given to countries to help them with their own development of security and civilized infrastructure, programs, supports and so on, amounts to less than \$10 billion U.S. a year. Compare the two, \$400 billion U.S. for militarization and \$10 billion in terms of foreign aid that actually would help with that human security network which surely is the true alternative to war in this world.

● (1355)

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, throughout the debate I have heard the member speak a number of times. One thing I am tired of hearing from the member's mouth is that if we support the coalition of the United States and other nations, we automatically want war and if we do not support it, we want peace.

I have news for the member. Whether she said it, inferred it or however she wants to put it, there are a number of us who have a lot at stake in regard to what is taking place. Nobody wants war. How we can avert that is what the debate is about.

The constant reminder that if we support Bush, we are in favour of war and if we support the United Nations, we have to be in favour of something else, when will the member get it straight in her head that nobody wants war, including this party?

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Speaker, those were the member's words. Let me respectfully suggest that it is not a question of who wants war and who does not want war. Can anybody seriously suggest that the 301 members in the chamber want war?

The reason it is important for us to be having these debates and to be considering concrete practical steps, however small they may be, to avert war is it is not just a question of what we want to see happen, it is a question of whether we are willing to do some of the things that can be done to actually avert that war and build on those alternatives for peace. That surely is the only purpose of our having debates like this.

I do not think we have to stand up and say to one another 301 times that none of us want war so why are we discussing it. Surely it

is about finding those practical steps that can be taken, however small or however big, that 301 members of Parliament can actually roll up their sleeves and do something to try to get us back on a path of peace.

I do not think anybody watching what is happening thinks that we are currently launched on a path to anything but war in Iraq, the way we are going.

The Speaker: When the debate is resumed following question period, there will be two and one-half minutes remaining to the hon. member for Halifax for questions and comments.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

VEHICLE SCRAPPAGE PROGRAM

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Environment Canada is happy to contribute to the New Brunswick Lung Association's Fredericton vehicle scrappage program. The contribution will ensure that this program and others like it in Canada will continue to be a success.

Poor air quality continues to impact on the health of Canadians. On-road vehicles, especially older vehicles, are significant contributors to this problem. While the Government of Canada's recently finalized stringent regulations for new on-road vehicles and fuels will go far in reducing harmful emissions which cause smog, there is still much work to be done to reduce these emissions from the transportation sector.

● (1400)

[Translation]

We must continue to work to improve air quality for Canadians everywhere. Vehicle scrappage programs play an important role in reducing emissions that contribute to smog and climate change.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, here is some free advice for the finance minister as he prepares his upcoming budget.

Stop giving corporate handouts to billionaires who just happen to be Liberals. Start giving broad based tax relief to call Canadians so that they may better provide for themselves and their families.

Stop trying, and failing, to pick winners and losers in the marketplace by subsidizing certain companies and certain industries. Start creating an economic environment favourable to all industries by reducing or eliminating certain taxes such as the capital tax.

Stop hiding money in the public accounts that has been lost to GST fraud. Start being transparent so that Canadians can see how their money is being used or misused.

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Finally, stop wasting money on a useless firearms registry that has already gone 500 times over budget and done absolutely nothing to combat crime.

Start being accountable to Parliament and taxpayers for what the government spends and how it spends it, unlike the last Minister of Finance.

* * *

QUEEN'S GOLDEN JUBILEE

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 5, 2003 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's golden jubilee year came to a close.

The 50th anniversary of Her Majesty's accession to the throne was a chance to celebrate the past 50 years of Canada's history, people and achievements and to look forward to the years to come. More than 45,000 Canadians were awarded the Golden Jubilee Medal honouring their significant contribution to Canada during the last 50 years.

The culminating point of the jubilee year, the royal couple's visit to our country in October saw a remarkable and memorable tour of many regions of Canada.

The golden jubilee year in Canada began with the House wishing Her Majesty a future bounding with hope and possibility.

We congratulate Her Majesty on such a successful and meaningful jubilee year.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 1995 the Government of Canada officially declared February as Black History Month. Black History Month is an opportunity to highlight the many contributions of black Canadians as inventors, politicians, military force members and community leaders.

Herb Carnegie, recipient of the 1996 Order of Ontario and founder of the first hockey school in Canada, was a star player in the 1940s. Because of racism he was never able to play in the National Hockey League.

Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré, the first black judge to be appointed to the courts in Quebec and first black dean of a law school in Canada, stands as a symbol of great achievement and is a source of inspiration.

Each February the St. Catharines Museum celebrates Black History Month as a tribute to Harriet Tubman. Her struggle with the underground railroad delivered more than 300 black slaves to the northern terminus, St. Catharines British Methodist Episcopal Church, better known as BME.

By celebrating the history and achievements of people of African heritage, we promote our diversity and a better understanding between our cultures.

RICHMOND HILL WINTER CARNIVAL

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the town of Richmond Hill celebrated the 35th anniversary of its winter carnival last weekend.

The Richmond Hill Winter Carnival comes about as a result of a strong community effort. The event is organized and planned by a group of eager and tireless volunteers. The carnival is funded through button and food revenues and through financial support from local and area businesses.

The mandate of the carnival is to organize a community party with events that appeal to families and residents of all ages, from youngsters to grandparents alike.

There were a variety of events for everyone to enjoy. These events included an amateur band, snowboarding, ookpik mini-putt, and horse driven sleigh rides to name a few.

The town of Richmond Hill is to be commended for this very successful event. It is recognized that it would have been entirely unable to achieve these objectives without the generous support of community businesses, volunteer organizations, town departments and individuals.

A special applause goes out to the youngsters who came out to help all weekend. These kids helped with everything from running messages to face painting. They are the community builders of tomorrow.

The town of Richmond Hill looks forward to another smashing success next year.

* * *

● (1405)

CURLING

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, everyone who follows curling realizes the unique contribution Saskatchewan makes to the game, but this weekend was truly extraordinary. On Sunday, the Saskatchewan junior women's team of Marliese Miller, Teejay Surik, Janelle Lemon and Chelsey Bell, coached by Bob Miller, defeated Nova Scotia 6 to 4 to win the Canadian junior women's curling championship.

This followed the tremendous victory Saturday by the Saskatchewan junior men's team. Steve Laycock, Christopher Haichert, Michael Jantzen and Kyler Broad, coached by Barry Fiendell, won the Canadian junior men's curling championship by defeating Alberta 9 to 5. These young people have a memory that will last a lifetime.

Congratulations to both teams and wish them the best at the world junior curling championships, March 22 to 30 in Flims, Switzerland.

SPEED SKATING

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a day to celebrate young people. It gives me great pleasure to stand today to acknowledge the accomplishment of a great Canadian athlete who earned a gold medal yesterday at the all around world speed skating championships in Sweden. I am referring to Clara Hughes of Winnipeg. Ms. Hughes also won a bronze medal Saturday in the 3,000 metres.

With these performances, last year's Olympic bronze medal in the 5,000 metres, and two bronze medals in cycling at the 1996 summer Olympics, she continues to demonstrate that she is one of the greatest Canadian female athletes in history.

I am sure all members will join me in congratulating this young athlete for her great victory and in thanking her for bringing much honour to Canada.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, national suicide prevention week, under way until February 15, is primarily designed to convince young people between the ages of 15 and 20 that there are solutions to their pain and that suicide is not one of them.

A myriad of activities will take place in all regions of Quebec to demystify the issue of suicide and raise awareness of suicide prevention and crisis intervention.

As a society, we have an important contribution to make to our teenagers. A person's pain must never be underestimated, whatever that person's age or reasons.

Adolescence is a particularly difficult phase of life, one when suicidal behaviour is more likely to occur. This is an intense period of social, family, physical and emotional change. Lack of self-esteem, difficulties in resolving conflicts, despair and the belief that there is no other way out are all often the result of pain that has become unbearable.

As the slogan says, "Putting an end to one's life is never the solution".

* * *

MÉLANIE TURGEON

Ms. Hélène Scherrer (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure and emotion that I rise in this House today to pay tribute to Mélanie Turgeon for her performance.

I had the pleasure of rubbing shoulders with Mélanie when she was just starting to ski. Already, she demonstrated the passion, tenacity and potential suggesting a very promising future.

In spite of injuries and setbacks, Mélanie persevered and went on to win eight World Cup medals during her career with the senior team. In 1994, she won five medals at the World Junior Championship, a yet unsurpassed record.

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Yesterday, she finally won the brilliant victory of becoming the downhill world champion in Saint-Moritz. This well-deserved victory made everyone in the greater Quebec City area who knew Mélanie and had been following her performances for years very happy.

Congratulations, Mélanie, and good luck to Canadian skiers Emily Brydon, Kelly Vanderbeek and Geneviève Simard, who, I am sure, will be there next time to give us a thrill.

* * *

[English]

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise with sadness today to express profound condolences of the seven young Calgarians, among whom were three of my constituents, whose young lives were tragically taken in the avalanche last week at Glacier National Park.

Ben Albert, Daniel Arato, Scott Broshko, Alex Pattillo, Michael Shaw, Jeffrey Trickett and Marissa Staddon all students of Strathcona-Tweedsmuir School, were lost in the prime of their lives. We mourn them.

It is hard to find words to express adequately our collective sorrow at a time such as this.

Today thousands of Calgarians will join together to share their grief for the families and the entire Tweedsmuir community.

On behalf of all hon. members, I would like to give thanks for the lives of these seven young Canadians, and to pray those in grief may be consoled.

* * *

SPEED SKATING

Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to acknowledge the accomplishment of a great Canadian athlete who became the first Canadian in 27 years to win the overall title at the world all around speed skating championships. She is Cindy Klassen of Winnipeg, my home city, who finished third in the women's 1,500 and 5,000 metres Sunday to capture the overall gold, and be crowned the most complete speed skater in the world. That is a signal honour.

Ms. Klassen was also second at the world spring championship last month and has won four World Cups so far this winter.

I am sure all members will join me in congratulating this young athlete for her great victory and in thanking her for bringing so much honour to Canada.

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•(1410)

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since Secretary of State Colin Powell made his speech at the UN, the price of oil has risen 35¢ a barrel, an increase of approximately 1%. In that same period the price of gas rose on average 6¢ a litre across Canada. In Yellowknife they are paying almost a dollar per litre. In Montreal they are paying just under 90¢. In Winnipeg the price of regular unleaded gas at the pump has risen from an average of 69.5¢ to a high of 76.9¢.

It is unconscionable that Canadians should be forced to pay for price increases at the pump that in no way reflect price increases in the world market.

The government should have a strategy to protect Canadians from price gouging that seeks to hide behind war or the anticipation of war. It should also have a more forceful strategy to replace our dependence on fossil fuels. A bigger coalition of those willing to consume less fossil fuels might obviate the perceived need for coalitions of those willing to go to war for energy related geopolitical reasons.

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[*Translation*]

MÉLANIE TURGEON

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Mélanie Turgeon from Beauport for her win at the Alpine World Skiing Championships yesterday in St. Moritz, Switzerland.

Mélanie is a good example of determination. In 1992, when she was only 16, she earned a place on the Canadian Alpine Ski Team. In 1994 she was recognized as the best junior skier in the world. After a few years of training, she showed in 1999 that she was part of the world elite in this sport.

Since then, she has placed among the best in the World Cup several times: a bronze medal in the World Cup in Sierra Nevada, Spain and a gold and silver medal in Innsbruck, Austria, in February 2000. She also competed in the Olympic Games. Now the list goes on.

Mélanie Turgeon, member of the Mont-Saint-Anne Ski Club, brought home Canada's first gold medal in ten years from the World Cup—to the surprise of many experts.

The Bloc Québécois joins me and all Quebeckers in congratulating Mélanie Turgeon and wishing her the best of luck and many more successes.

* * *

[*English*]

PRIME MINISTER GÖRAN PERSSON

Mr. Joe Jordan (Leeds—Grenville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask the House to join me today in welcoming to Canada the Prime Minister of Sweden, Göran Persson. This morning the Prime Minister met

with Mr. Persson to discuss the shared values between our two countries.

Canada and Sweden have a very positive bilateral relationship based on our shared commitments to international peacekeeping, democratic development, human rights and a strong support for multilateralism in the United Nations.

Canada and Sweden have worked closely together on a number of issues, including protection for war affected children, alleviating the international trade and small arms and arctic and circumpolar research.

This morning Mr. Persson reaffirmed our close ties by referring to our countries as like-minded and calling the Prime Minister a distinguished leading politician.

I ask the House to join me in wishing Mr. Persson an enjoyable and productive visit to Canada.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, today the House has been debating Canada's position in the world and whether the government will take a position on Iraq. Certainly we have seen no leadership whatsoever from the government on the Iraqi question. We have seen no leadership from the government on any issue affecting foreign affairs with which Canada has to deal.

What we have seen after nearly 10 years of government, is a diminished position for Canada as a world player, as a country that is taken seriously. What we have seen after nearly 10 years of disastrous leadership and a lacklustre, difficult and poor understanding of the ability to negotiate with our foreign trading partners and our foreign NATO partners, is a government that does not know where it is headed, does not know why it is headed in that direction and does not know which position—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Peterborough.

* * *

PARKS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the Speech from the Throne, we committed to 10 new national parks, 5 marine conservation areas and the expansion of 3 existing parks. Each one would protect for future generations a representative part of Canada's unique natural regions. We would not be protecting just land, sea and seabed, we would be protecting the biodiversity of Canada.

Each area would become a model of sustainable use of land, sea or lake. For example, the marine areas would have a fully protected core surrounded by carefully managed use zones. They would provide economic opportunity while protecting biological richness.

From the throne speech to the budget is sometimes a long step. In this case, it is a step which must be taken. I urge that these parks be a significant feature of the upcoming budget.

Oral Questions

•(1415)

SPORTS

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this weekend the rest of the world had to take second place. Melanie Turgeon of Quebec won the first world alpine skiing championship in 10 years. Melanie's blistering 94 second run topped off a remarkable week for Canada's ski team.

Cindy Klassen of Manitoba became the first Canadian in 27 years to win the overall title at the world all around speed skating championships, while Clara Hughes, also of Manitoba, took the gold medal in the 5,000 metres.

Brian McKeever of Alberta placed first at the world disabled ski championships, while world cup bobsledder Pierre Leuders steered this team to a first place victory.

In golf, Kelowna's Dave Barr, became the first Canadian golfer ever to capture a Champions Tour event.

Congratulations on behalf of many Canadians. These athletes made us proud, gave us spirit, enthusiasm and now the rest of the world knows why Canada is tops.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Göran Persson, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, reports are airing today on the latest GST fraud scam: \$22 million collected in rebates by phony lumber companies.

We now know that the Auditor General warned of this specific case in 1999 yet, instead of auditing the claim, the government sent it back into the system with approval for a refund cheque.

After months of the revenue minister bragging to the House about the government's record on GST administration, how does she justify this appalling incompetence?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this particular case, which is now before the courts, came to the attention of CCRA in 1997. It is in the courts today because of the hard work of our auditors, not because of the CBC and not because of the Auditor General.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, for weeks the minister has been telling the House that GST fraud is no more than \$25 million and here is a case of where it is \$22 million alone.

The question is obvious. Instead of feeding us these horse feathers, when will the minister come to the House and come clean on the real size of GST fraud in the country?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been absolutely truthful and forthcoming with the Leader of the Opposition and everyone else.

In the last six years, as identified by the courts, the total in GST fraud has been \$25.4 million. That is a lot of money. However a lot of cases have gone to court because of the hard work of my officials. We are doing our job and he should stand up and acknowledge that.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that is the government that shut down the GST fraud unit and stopped reporting GST losses in the public accounts in 1994.

Even though this case was flagged and even though revenue ministers and finance ministers knew about the fraud in this case, managers at the credit union said that individuals were walking out with bags full of tens of thousands of dollars in taxpayer money.

Who does the Prime Minister hold accountable for this appalling incompetence and wasted tax dollars?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important for everyone to know that as soon as CCRA has any suspicion of fraud, cheques are stopped. They should also know that we took the advice of the Auditor General in 1999 very seriously. We have implemented every one of the recommendations of the Auditor General.

As I said, we are doing our job. We have 5,000 auditors, 1,000 investigators and a special enforcement unit of 175 officers who are doing their job and doing it well for Canadians.

* * *

•(1420)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let us just see if the government really is doing its job.

One of Canada's NATO allies, Turkey, has asked for help to protect its borders in light of a possible war in Iraq. It is requesting emergency consultations under NATO's mutual defence treaty.

After a weekend of dithering, our Prime Minister appeared to say this morning that Canada should prepare to help Turkey.

In light of the Prime Minister's statement, is Canada prepared to pre-deploy troops to Turkey?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is normal that Turkey would like to be ready in case there is a problem. Canada has always been ready for any situation. Because Turkey is Iraq's neighbour it is normal that it wants to be ready in case there is a conflict there. We all hope that this preparation will not be needed.

Oral Questions

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we could flip a coin as to whether that is a yes or no.

Of course everyone wants to be ready but Turkey feels that its territory is being threatened. It is the responsibility of NATO countries to respond to Turkey's request for consultations on this issue. Some of the allies seem willing to put NATO's credibility at risk.

Has Canada informed these waffling nations and members of NATO that they have a duty to protect their allies, yes or no?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my position is clear. I said that Turkey was absolutely right to be ready. It is the neighbour of Iraq and there might be a lot of consequences for it if there is a war. We said, yes, NATO should help it to be ready, but at the same time we hope that it will not be needed.

* * *

[Translation]

IRAQ

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, diplomatic efforts in the crisis with Iraq have been stepped up. The United States and Great Britain are trying to convince the Security Council to give the green light for a war against Iraq, while France, Germany and Russia are working on a peaceful solution through increased inspections.

Can the Prime Minister tell us which camp the government is in, with those wishing to disarm Iraq through war or with those wishing to disarm Iraq through peaceful means?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since July, Canada has been in just one camp, that requiring anyone wishing to wage war to obtain the approval of the United Nations. We were the first to speak about resolution 1441, which was, in fact, adopted, and we want Saddam Hussein to respect this resolution, so that there will be no need for intervention in Iraq.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is being interpreted differently. There is an international debate, in which leaders and heads of state are acting as heads of state, holding a debate and taking a stand. Here, there is silence and a wait-and-see attitude from the Prime Minister.

Will he measure up to his predecessors and play an active role, rather than waiting for other people to decide for him?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would look at the facts, he would realize that, presently, the entire world agrees with Canada's position. Even the President of the United States has said that he hopes there will be a new resolution from the Security Council.

Since the beginning, we have said that intervention in Iraq was impossible without the consent of the United Nations, and that is the policy that everyone wants to follow. The world most definitely wants peace, and we will have peace if we follow the United Nations.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Friday the President of the United States said, "The game is over" in connection with the UN inspection process in Iraq. The French Prime Minister's reaction was "It is not a game, and it is not over".

Should the Prime Minister of Canada, in his regular contacts with President Bush, not let him know that Canada also does not consider the game to be over but, on the contrary, that Canada feels that utmost support must be given to the inspection process put in place by the UN?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely the position of this government, that the process put in place by the UN must be followed. As I said last week, and reiterate today, Friday will be a very important day, since it is the day on which the UN chief weapons inspector, Mr. Blix, will be reporting to the Security Council. That will be when we can reach conclusions. At present, mere speculation is not particularly worthwhile. We must stick to the process that has been clearly set out by the United Nations.

● (1425)

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, President Bush is not just threatening Iraq but the UN as well, when he indicates as he has that the present situation constitutes a test for the organization.

Ought Canada not to make it clear to President Bush that we believe that the UN is not putting its credibility at stake by trying to avoid war, but is instead fulfilling its role, since this is precisely the reason for the UN's existence?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we have been saying since July; that, under the present circumstances, the United Nations process must be followed very closely. Resolution 1441 is very clear and was adopted unanimously. It calls upon the inspectors to do their job. Mr. Blix has already reported once and will be making another report this Friday. All of this is within the mandate of the Security Council. Everyone is working to try to have peace, not war.

[English]

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

The Prime Minister spoke of a possible second resolution from the Security Council. Would he indicate whether or not the position of the Government of Canada is that the government is open to a second Security Council resolution that would incorporate elements of the French, German and Russian proposal that comes as an alternative to what the Americans obviously have in mind as a follow up to resolution 1441?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always said that it would be very desirable to have a second United Nations resolution but all that will depend on the report of Dr. Blix and the reaction of the members of the Security Council to it.

The Security Council is what everybody should follow at this time. We will advise the House on the best course of action after Dr. Blix's report on Friday. However it will be the members of the Security Council who decide how to react to the report by Dr. Blix.

Oral Questions

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, presumably the Security Council members are interested in Canada's opinion on possible options, so I will ask the Prime Minister my question again. What is the position of the Government of Canada with respect to the proposals put forward by France and Germany to increase weapons inspectors and to have a greater UN presence in Iraq as options to the kind of war that is being contemplated by the United States?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no proposition by the Germans and French at this moment. In fact, they said that very clearly today.

When Dr. Blix reports, every member of the Security Council will have to react. Germany, of course, is a member of the Security Council at this time, and the French are always there, and so they will have to react.

I am saying that I hope Saddam Hussein will have complied and I hope that Dr. Blix will be able to report on Friday that Saddam Hussein wants to respect and will respect resolution 1441. If he does that then there will be no war. Saddam Hussein knows very well what he has to do and that is to satisfy Dr. Blix on behalf of the United Nations.

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GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, in 1995 the Liberals disbanded Revenue Canada's enforcement services unit, a 40 person intelligence unit whose sole focus was GST fraud.

Because of that decision, today there are no auditors specifically tasked with fighting GST fraud.

Will the minister commit immediately to restore the GST enforcement services unit created by the Progressive Conservative government to fight GST fraud?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take all fraud very seriously. I want to tell the member opposite that in 1995 CCRA was prosecuting about 22 cases per year. We are now prosecuting 50 cases per year.

He is absolutely wrong when he says that we have disbanded. In fact, we have expanded our activities and the results are showing that we are doing the job.

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, in 1999 the Auditor General warned the government about GST fraud and urged it to stop handing out cheques without proof of transaction. A simple way to do that would be to require that receipts or bills of sale be attached to the refund request form.

Could the minister explain why three years later she has not followed through on such a simple recommendation?

• (1430)

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Again, Mr. Speaker, the facts are that in 1999 the Auditor General made very specific recommendations to CCRA, to my agency, and every one of those recommendations have been implemented.

Whenever there is a suspicion of fraud, the cheque stops. It does not go out.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Alliance has been warning the minister for months that there is a crisis in the Department of National Revenue. Both the GST fraud conference held in 1994, and the Auditor General in 1999, warned that this fraud would occur.

The minister said that it was only \$25 million, but in this case \$22 million has been stolen and gone forever, and we know of two more cases, which brings the total to nearly \$50 million.

Will she continue to downplay this massive theft as a mere pittance, or is she so incompetent that she does not know the real total?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I have been telling the member repeatedly is that we have a number of cases before the courts. I have also assured him that we would be as open and forthcoming as possible; coming before the public accounts committee and sharing with it all of the information that we have, because we take this very seriously.

The fact is that to date, over the last six years, the courts have identified \$25.4 million. We do not prejudge the court decisions. I would suggest to the member that he not do or say anything that would prejudice cases that are presently before the courts.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, they take it as seriously as their promise to scrap, kill and abolish the GST. It is clear that the Liberals never intended to scrap the GST as they promised.

The former finance minister, and present finance minister, are guilty of incompetence and neglect. All the revenue ministers since 1993 have been guilty of incompetence and neglect.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Is a billion dollars stolen from taxpayers just a simple administrative problem, as he called it this morning, or are we on our way to another billion dollar scandal?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a friend in the gallery observing us who will be surprised that the ministers of finance of our administration in the last 10 years have been called incompetent.

We have had six consecutive balanced budgets. We have reduced the deficit from 6.2% of GDP to 6 consecutive surpluses. We have seen a reduction of taxes by more than \$100 billion and we have invested money in social programs at the same time.

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[Translation]

IRAQ

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is a major power struggle going on right now in Brussels with France, Belgium and Germany opposed to NATO implementing measures to defend Turkey in the event of an attack against Iraq and embarking on a logic of war.

Oral Questions

How can the Prime Minister embark on a logic of war by saying that he supports the United States, when he has always inferred that he was waiting for the result of the report from weapons inspectors before taking any position? The Prime Minister is being inconsistent.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always held the same position. Since July, we have said that there must be a UN resolution. Since July, we have told Saddam Hussein that he must comply with resolution 1441 and disarm.

The best thing he could do is to take us seriously. It is perfectly normal that countries neighbouring Iraq are preparing for a possible war provoked by the fact that President Saddam Hussein does not want to recognize the authority of the United Nations.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the same subject, Secretary of State Colin Powell described the attitude of Belgium, France and Germany as, and I quote, inexcusable.

Does the Prime Minister also share the opinion of the United States on this? Does he believe that these countries are wrong and that he is right?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are many other countries in NATO. Therefore, it is not a question of my being right. I find it completely acceptable that a member of NATO would want to ready itself when it borders a country where there could be a war. There could be terrible consequences for Turkey if things are not resolved there. We continue to pursue the approach that we in Canada prefer, exploring every possible diplomatic avenue to ensure there is no war.

* * *

• (1435)

[English]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the revenue minister is trying to claim that her department is proactive and that no money goes out if there is a suspicion of fraud. In British Columbia bags of GST money were walking out of the credit union. Terrorism could be involved.

Is the minister telling Canadians that \$22 million went to British Columbia before there was any suspicion whatsoever of fraud?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the case that he is referring to came to our attention and action began in 1997. That case is presently before the courts and I would urge him not to prejudge, but let the courts do their job.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, her own department has said the money is gone and will never be recovered. It does not matter who is guilty. The money is gone.

The government has already admitted organized crime is defrauding Canadians of millions through the GST fraud. Now we learn that international terrorists might have discovered that there is free money in Canada when the Liberals are in charge.

Will the Prime Minister instruct the Solicitor General to order an investigation into how much has been lost to GST fraud by international organized crime and by international terrorists?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my agency works very closely with the police, the RCMP and others. We bring every suspicion to court and charges are laid. If the member opposite has any information about any fraud I urge him to give it to the agency. We will investigate it and involve the RCMP. We are always pleased with our prosecution rate of success.

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[Translation]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, true to form, the Minister of Industry is trying to evade the question by placing responsibility for the hike in gas prices on the Government of Quebec. However, the federal government is the one responsible for the Competition Act.

Does the minister understand that when oil and gas companies control gasoline from the wellhead to the pump and when they agree to deliberately create a shortage on the market, that is a sign that there is collusion and that competition has been eliminated. What will it take to get the minister to act?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the provinces have the constitutional power to regulate retail gasoline prices.

On the federal level, there is the Competition Bureau, but the problems described by the hon. member relate to retail gasoline prices. That is why I am saying that it is the provinces' responsibility.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in anticipation of a war in Iraq, the oil and gas companies have deliberately decreased their inventory to create shortages and inflate refining costs.

Can the minister not compel the federal Competition Bureau to intervene on the grounds of anti-competitive acts in this sector?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from time to time, the Competition Bureau has closely examined what is really happening in the oil and gas industry. But the fact is that we have not discovered any problems in this regard.

If the hon. member wants retail prices to be regulated, I suggest that he speak to the provincial government.

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[English]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Gary Webster was dumped last week as the CEO of the Canadian firearms registry.

As a reward for his mismanagement of the \$1 billion firearms registry he received a soft landing and has been made a special adviser to Morris Rosenberg, the deputy minister of justice. Incredibly, Morris Rosenberg and 49 of his 52 executives received a performance bonus for wasting \$1 billion on the registry.

Oral Questions

My question to the Minister of Justice is, why are bureaucrats who have proven their incompetence rewarded with plum postings?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we look at the whole group of people who have been working on the question of gun control, there are many people in the group who have been working hard and who have given our Canadian population their time and experience.

Members on the other side of the House do not believe in public safety. On this side of the House we believe in gun control. We believe in public safety and we will proceed with gun control because it is in the best interests of Canadians as a whole.

• (1440)

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member for Leeds—Grenville said that the gun registry is no more complex than the income tax system. Coincidentally, Bill Baker, the new CEO of the firearms registry comes from the tax department where he was responsible for compliance. That is code for squeezing taxpayers till they squeak.

Now he will be setting his sights on duck hunters and farmers, and forcing them to sign up with the \$1 billion firearms registry. We have hired a tax collector to run the firearms registry. Can duck hunters and farmers now expect to be squeezed till they squeak?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members opposite should be open minded with Canadians and tell them the truth. The truth is that they do not believe in public safety. They do not support gun control at all, whether licensing or registration. What hon. members opposite do not like is that the government is heading in the right direction.

The Auditor General tabled her report, we accepted her recommendations, and we will fix the problems. Last week we received two reports. We said that we wanted to proceed with a good action plan, and this is exactly what the government will do.

* * *

FILM INDUSTRY

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the \$5 billion Canadian film industry is facing a crisis. In B.C. last fall, where the industry accounts for almost \$2 billion in revenue and over 25,000 jobs, union jobs dropped by 50%. The loss of tax deferral provisions has sent the film industry to Australia and Ireland where there are generous tax credits.

What is the Minister of Finance doing to ensure that Canada's job intensive film industry remains globally competitive?

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government understands the importance of the film and television industry for the Canadian economy, particularly in the provinces of British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec.

We are aware of the recent developments. That is the reason why the Minister of Finance has met with representatives of the film and television industry. The government continues to consult with

industry representatives to ensure that support levels for the film industry address the changing market conditions.

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HEALTH

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

People from across Canada gathered this weekend in Ottawa for the people's summit on health care and they strongly supported a public, non-profit health care system.

Why is the Prime Minister, in his accord, turning over billions of dollars to the privatizing premiers like Klein, Campbell, Eves and Lord with no strings attached so they can spend it on corporate, for profit delivery of health care services? Why on earth did the Prime Minister push Don Mazankowski, king of the privatizers, to chair his new Canada health council?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the first time that we have had a program that has been initiated by the federal government where money is directly allocated for certain priorities in the health care system.

It has been agreed to by the premiers. They have all recognized, in the document that was discussed, that the five conditions of medicare cannot be changed and will remain with the public health system in the 10 provinces and three territories of our land.

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CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week CIDA recognized Gildan Activewear with an international award for its excellence in social and ethical responsibility. Gildan is the same Montreal T-shirt company that began firing employees in Honduras last November for trying to bargain collectively. As a result of Gildan's union busting activities, the Quebec solidarity fund is rethinking its multimillion dollar investment in this outfit.

Will the minister responsible for CIDA rescind this award immediately and inform the House how this company ever was nominated in the first place?

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, in collaboration with CIDA, have been supporting the awards of excellence in Canadian private sector activities and developments since its inception in 1990.

Gildan Activewear won the award for the management of its plant in Honduras. Gildan Activewear has responded that these third party allegations are groundless, and according to Gildan the employees were let go because of seasonal variation in demand.

Oral Questions

•(1445)

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue has denied the claim that fraudulent use of the GST export tax credit has cost Canadians \$1 billion, as the economists state. If she disagrees with that amount could she tell the House how much, in her view, GST fraud has cost Canadians above and beyond the cases that have come to court?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again we hear the number \$1 billion, for which there is no evidence whatsoever. I say to the member opposite and to others that if they have any evidence of a number of that magnitude to bring it forward.

I would like to know where they get it from because there is no evidence to suggest that anything beyond the \$25.4 million that the courts have identified over the last six years, and the cases that we have presently before the courts which have yet to be determined because they are before the courts, is the actual figure.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, recent news reports reveal the deeply troubling link between GST fraud and terrorist groups. The founder and chair of the board of the Khalsa Credit Union, where fraudulent GST credit cheques were cashed, is now in prison, a suspect in the 1985 Air India bombing.

Could the minister tell the House how many other cases are being investigated by her department which suggest that terrorist groups may be using GST fraud to fund their networks?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member and any other interested member to attend the court and hear the evidence before they jump to conclusions. Let the courts do the work.

However there are some interesting and important statistics. We collect almost \$30 billion in GST. Last year the work of the 5,000 auditors and 1,000 investigators resulted in an additional \$850 million in GST revenue. We are always on the lookout for fraud, but members must admit, they are doing a good job.

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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, seven bureaucrats will be under RCMP investigation for the Liberal sponsorship fiasco. Presumably they could be held responsible for those crooked contracts, but this would mean that the Liberals now reject the concept of ministerial responsibility. We know these public servants did not benefit from the slush fund like the Liberal Party did.

If the minister really wants to get to the bottom of the mess, he has to look a little higher up the ladder. Instead of blaming bureaucrats, will the government now recall Alfonso Gagliano to explain what really went on?

Ms. Judy Sgro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. This specific review relates to the administration of the sponsorship program. There are other measures

being taken, including a review by the Auditor General of over 700 files, as well as reviews ongoing by the RCMP on a broader scope.

I am confident that we will all get to the bottom of this at the completion of the reviews.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, everybody remembers that 10 years ago the Liberals' campaign red book promised ministerial accountability and transparency in government. Apparently the Prime Minister vowed at that time he would hold his ministers responsible when things like this went wrong, but I guess he did not mean wrong for taxpayers.

The sponsorship program was set up to reward the Liberal supporters with taxpayer money. That is how it worked. Gagliano claimed he did what he was told, just a good little soldier. We have to believe anybody under him was following the same marching orders.

Will the minister now admit that he will never get answers to what went wrong until he asks the guy who was giving the orders?

Ms. Judy Sgro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, there is an ongoing investigation. We are looking into all elements of this. It is important. We want transparency and accountability in our government. We intend to pursue that, at the same time respecting the legal and HR obligations that we owe as a government.

* * *

[Translation]

MARIJUANA

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the report of the special committee that recommended that the possession of less than 30 grams of marijuana be decriminalized, the Minister of Justice announced his intention to amend the act.

However, it is urgent to take action, because Crown prosecutors are on their own and they are wondering whether they should initiate proceedings, or wait for the changes announced by the minister.

Does the minister realize that any delay in amending the act maintains a legal vacuum that is incompatible with the sound administration of justice?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a number of discussions have taken place in recent months regarding the use of cannabis in Canada.

The Senate report, which was tabled in August or September, favoured legalizing the drug.

Then, the report tabled before Christmas by the House committee advocated decriminalization, which is not to be confused with legalization.

At the time, I made it clear that the government would examine both reports and table, at the earliest opportunity, a balanced policy reflecting the values of all Canadians.

• (1450)

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the signal sent by the minister is so confusing that, on September 13, 2002, the Supreme Court itself postponed the hearing of three criminal cases involving marijuana.

Will the minister take his responsibilities and introduce a bill very soon, so as to clarify the applicable law? When will he do it? People are waiting, and that includes defence counsel and Crown prosecutors.

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fully understand the hon. member's eagerness, but I simply want to point out that the current legislation is essentially the one that is applicable.

As for the decision made by the Supreme Court before the holiday season, hon. members realize of course that I cannot comment on it.

However, I already said on a number of occasions that the government will very soon go ahead with a policy that reflects all Canadian values. We will also move forward with a policy that will allow us to achieve a balanced approach based on these Canadian values.

* * *

[English]

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on February 8 the Toronto police chief, Julian Fantino, said that he has repeatedly called on the federal government to install laws that would speed up investigation into Canada's sadistic plague of child pornography. Bureaucracy is bringing investigators to their knees. Some 40 pages of document must be completed, plus a signature of the justice of the peace must be obtained before a raid can take place. In the United States and Great Britain, only one page is required for a senior cop to sign.

When is the Solicitor General going to stop protecting child predators and start protecting children?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe the member has not been paying attention. Because of the efforts of this caucus and this government, the government has been taking on child predators and child pornography since 1993.

In fact, with respect to the specific incident that the member talks about, I did in this House say two weeks ago that we have created a joint steering committee to implement a national strategy to combat Internet based child pornography. There will be another meeting with all the police chiefs on February 19, and we will continue to move ahead on that issue.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister should not try to convince me. He should try to convince the chief of police in Toronto.

Is the justice minister satisfied with the ever increasing number of house arrests, community service sentences that are being handed

down by our courts for child abusers, child pornographers, child cripples? If his answer is yes that he is satisfied, he should say so. If it is no, will he bring in tough new legislation today?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first the hon. member should have a look at Bill C-20.

Let us start with Bill C-15A, which now of course actually is the legislation in Canada that we have been using. We are talking about Internet luring. The hon. member as well should recognize that in this country we have one of the toughest laws in the world. With Bill C-20, we are going to be even more effective and more efficient.

What the hon. member should do first is read the bill and, second, support the bill so it can become law in Canada as quickly as we can do it.

* * *

MULTICULTURALISM

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians across the country are concerned about apparent increases in racism and anti-Semitism in their communities.

Could the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and the Status of Women tell the House what the Government of Canada is doing to combat racism and anti-Semitism?

Hon. Jean Augustine (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, expressions of intolerance have no place in Canadian society. Racist and anti-Semitic activities destroy the fabric of our society, destroy and undermine our fundamental values of respect, of equality and security.

Canada and Canadians will not tolerate expressions of hate. Canada's strong anti-hate legislation, the Criminal Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act, makes it a crime to incite hate and to incite hate against an identifiable group.

Just this morning I met with members of the Jewish community. We will work together to make sure that we build the society that we all want.

* * *

• (1455)

HEALTH

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government talks about controlling provincial government health care spending, yet over half of the federal health department's budget goes to aboriginal agencies with too few strings attached to it.

According to senior band members, the executive of the health centre at Sandy Bay reserve had a wonderful Christmas vacation in Jamaica. Then, tired after their week of work in January, they took a week in Vegas. Now they are at the West Edmonton Mall.

Would the tough talking minister like to tell us what percentage of Health Canada's budget is used for vacations?

Oral Questions

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of the specific situation that the hon. member raises, but let me assure him that if he has facts that he wants to bring to my attention I will have my department follow up.

I know the hon. member is aware that aboriginal people in this country suffer from the poorest health of any Canadians, generally speaking. In fact my department, along with others, is redoubling our efforts to work with aboriginal people in partnership to try to improve their health status. I would ask the hon. member and others to assist us in that.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we cannot really blame people for doubting the minister on this one. Band members have asked for an audit in Sandy Bay and it has been ignored. The government does nothing.

It has been two full years since the Virginia Fontaine situation. The minister claims that she is interested in doing something. It has been two years: nothing done there.

The former assistant deputy minister billed Health Canada for 137 trips in a three year period. He took his girlfriend on over 100 of them, but nothing.

What does it take to get the government to take its responsibility seriously and direct money to aboriginal health, not vacations?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member refers to the situation of the Virginia Fontaine addiction centre. I can reassure the hon. member that as soon as it came to the attention of my predecessor that there was alleged wrongdoing, he in fact instituted a forensic audit. We have gone to court twice to ensure that the audit is completed properly. In fact, we are still awaiting the outcome of that forensic audit.

It is unfair of this hon. member to suggest that when wrongdoing or alleged wrongdoing is brought to our attention we do not follow it up. We do.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IVORY COAST

Mr. Yves Rochelleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a press release issued by the Canadian government on January 27 about the Ivory Coast peace accords signed in France by the major political parties and the rebels, Canada reiterated its support for an independent investigation into human rights violations in the Ivory Coast.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs explain what the Government of Canada intends to do within the international community to bring to light all of the facts, including what happened in the rebel-controlled northern part of the country, and to ensure that those responsible are brought before international justice?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are following the situation in Ivory Coast closely. It is a concern to us. We are providing assistance to Canadians who are there. We are prepared to work together with the international community, first to restore peace, and then to lay the foundations of civil society in this important African country.

[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Rex Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls, PC): Mr. Speaker, I have been informed that the government has promised to provide benefits to spouses of members of the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit. However, to this date the government has not fulfilled that promise.

Will the Minister of Veterans Affairs deliver on the promise to provide benefits to the spouses of members of the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit?

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always listened and applied the laws that exist today. Every eligible applicant, based on disability under the Pension Act when related to military service, will be given the benefits due to them.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has invoked land use bans on some elk farms.

Cervid producers worry it will be expanded even though the Canadian Food Inspection Agency lacks the scientific proof to do so. Therefore, they may not report suspected chronic wasting disease because of the government not having a contingency plan.

What will the minister do to ensure that the reporting system is not compromised from fear of the CFIA?

● (1500)

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member knows that for reportable diseases such as chronic wasting disease, if anyone, whether a producer, a veterinarian, or whoever is aware of that or suspects that, does not report that, they are breaking the law. If they do not report it and it becomes known, they will be treated according to the laws that are in place.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonnette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a domestic from Morocco has been exploited, and literally sequestered, by her employer for close to ten years. She decided to hand herself over to immigration officers in order to escape from the untenable conditions in which she was living. Ms. Marhfoul has exhausted all avenues of recourse and now faces deportation.

Considering her past experiences, is the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration prepared to take the humanitarian approach and to stay her deportation, as well as sending a clear message to unscrupulous employers who abuse their domestic employees, by instituting legal proceedings?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I think that those who are contemplating hiring illegal immigrants need to be made aware of the law. They are subject to a \$50,000 fine and six months in jail. That is the first thing. Second, I do not think that this is the place to negotiate specific cases. Often, we do not have all the facts, but we will try to enforce the law so that the integrity of the program is maintained.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Human Resources Development Canada set up a pilot project to process applications for employment insurance benefits by telephone in Moncton, New Brunswick, called Teledec. Teledec was then transferred to Bathurst to serve claimants in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, without hiring new employees. The result is that people wait for up to two days before the line is free and they can talk to an officer.

Will the minister finally provide quality service to the EI recipients of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, and hire people to do the work?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our intention is to provide quality service to Canadians no matter where they live. I would be glad to look into this particular incident and talk to the member about it.

Our department works at ensuring that the efforts of providing good service, whether it be by telephone, directly over the Internet, or by personal attention, are clear. It must be a priority because these programs are so very important to us.

* * *

THE BUDGET

DESIGNATION OF ORDER OF THE DAY

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), I request the designation of an order of the day to allow the presentation of a budget speech at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, February 18, next.

The Speaker: The Chair has received notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for St. Albert.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

Jack Layton, the new leader of the NDP who wants to join us in the House, and his colleague the member for Winnipeg Centre need to understand that there are some rules in the House, such as privilege and privileges of the House. That is what I want to speak to today.

Privilege

Page 66 of Marleau and Montpetit states:

In December 1989, a third committee was created to review the Parliament of Canada Act regarding the powers, duties and obligations of Members—

It quotes from the third report:

The privileges, immunities and powers of the House of Commons and its Members are established by section 18 of the Constitution Act, 1867, and section 4 of the Parliament of Canada Act. These privileges are intended to enable Members of Parliament to carry out their functions and activities and to represent Canadians. These privileges, immunities and powers must be considered and respected in the execution of search warrants—

It continues on under the heading “Privilege Versus Contempt”:

Any disregard of or attack on the rights, powers and immunities of the House and its Members, either by an outside person or body, or by a Member of the House, is referred to as a “breach of privilege” and is punishable by the House.

Page 68 of Marleau and Montpetit states:

The premature disclosure of committee reports and proceedings has frequently been raised as a matter of privilege. However, in those instances where no specific individual has been identified, the matter has not been pursued even though it might appear to involve contempt.

I refer the House to an article in today's *Ottawa Citizen*. If the Speaker will permit me to read from the article, the headline is “Ad firm report ignores political meddling, Parliamentary panel sidesteps politicians' role in sponsorship scandal, MP charges”. The newspaper article states:

A parliamentary committee's report into the controversial sponsorship program whitewashes allegations of political interference and lays the blame on bureaucrats for mishandling the contracts at the centre of the scandal, says an NDP MP.

[The member for Winnipeg Centre] said the public accounts committee's draft report into the three contracts given to Montreal-based Groupaction “doesn't even touch” the allegations of political interference, which was a key reason the committee decided to investigate and hold hearings in the first place.

The secret report, which has yet to be tabled with Parliament, is expected to be discussed at a closed meeting of the committee today.

“To me, the report misses the whole point,” says [the member for Winnipeg Centre], who was recently removed from the committee. “There were overwhelming indications that political interference was the real story, but anyone reading the report years from now wouldn't even know political interference was even contemplated as an issue in this.”

[The member for Winnipeg Centre] said the report unfairly dumps the blame on public servants without even mentioning concerns or suspicions that bureaucrats were simply following orders from their political masters.

[The member for Winnipeg Centre] acknowledged the committee never found any evidence of political interference but said it was “offensive” to make current and former public servants the “scapegoats”. Unless changes are made, the NDP will issue a dissenting report.

I will quote one more paragraph from the article:

The committee's draft report, which was written in November, but kept secret to avoid leaks before Parliament returned from Christmas break, was to be discussed at an in camera meeting two weeks ago. The Liberal-dominated committee agreed to defer the report so committee members had more time to consider it. The report has since been leaked to the media.

The article continues on to talk about more details of the report.

Mr. Speaker, I am the chairman of the public accounts committee and the committee, as pointed out in the article, has not even deliberated on this particular report. We have not discussed it in any way. We have not agreed to anything in any way. We have not tabled any report in the House. There is in essence no report at this point in time.

Privilege

•(1505)

This morning there was a media advisory issued by the member for Winnipeg Centre stating that he would be available for comment Monday, February 10 on a minority report he has prepared regarding the May 2002 special audit report of the Auditor General on the Groupaction affair. I have to advise also that the press conference was cancelled prior to its scheduled time.

Another question is, how can a dissenting report be prepared on something that does not exist? If one wants to dissent to something, there has to be something to dissent to and the report does not exist at this point in time.

Not only that, but the member for Winnipeg Centre is no longer a member of the public accounts committee. It is not even a member of the committee leaking a report. It is a member of the House who has been given privileged information by virtue of the fact that he used to be a member of the public accounts committee. That was when he was given the report, privileged as a confidential document, for it to be discussed by the members. However, now that he is no longer a member of the committee, he is an ordinary member of the House who has this privileged information in his possession and who has decided to talk to the media about it. He has abused the privileges of the committee and the privileges of the House.

I pointed out page 68 of Marleau and Montpetit and how, when we have been unable to identify who has leaked a report, it is very difficult to point a finger and hold someone accountable. However, in this particular instance, the member for Winnipeg Centre has been openly critical in the media and has talked about a report in the media that does not exist but may be considered by the committee.

Therefore, I believe that there is a prima facie case of a breach of parliamentary privilege. Mr. Speaker, if you agree, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

•(1510)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the comments and allegations made by the hon. member. I have spoken to the member for Winnipeg Centre.

First, if we want to go back and retrace this situation and how information is now in the public realm and is being commented on in terms of the committee's report, we should go back to at least January 31 when the *National Post* ran a story in which it was made clear that it had obtained a 34 page draft report.

I want to be very clear that the member for Winnipeg Centre did not breach any confidentiality. He did not release a draft report or any other report from the committee. This story became part of the public realm on January 31. There was extensive coverage of it in terms of what the committee was considering.

I want to be very clear that the member did not release a draft report to the *National Post*. The *National Post* obtained it by whatever means, but certainly not from the member. Maybe that needs to be followed up. In terms of that information then being in the public realm, certainly there were stories again today

I find it curious that the allegation is that the member has released a report. The report is not yet concluded. Clearly the member was expressing his own opinions about how the report was moving

forward, his own concerns about the whole situation, but he in no way released a report. The report is not yet concluded.

I do want to say that the member for Winnipeg Centre had sent out a media advisory for a briefing on his dissenting report for today. That was cancelled when it was clear that the committee report was not yet concluded and in fact his own report is not concluded. On that point he clearly did acknowledge that he should not have done that and he cancelled the briefing.

Again I do not believe that the information the member has brought forward in any way shows that the particular member has breached confidentiality or the ethics of the House. Clearly as of 10 days ago the information was available in the *National Post*. It was in the public realm. The member for Winnipeg Centre then commented on his own speculation about where the report was going and his own opinions about that, but in no way has he released the report from the committee. In fact it is still under consideration in that committee today.

I do not believe that a case exists against the member and I would urge the Speaker to take that into account.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, this is an extremely serious situation not only in that a report has been released before actually being tabled in the House, but because it is a continuing issue. Members may remember that less than a week ago we discussed the same thing where a report that was to be tabled in the House had been in the press the previous morning.

Why do we have the type of system that we have? Committees work diligently to prepare solid reports dealing with important issues for the nation. If this process is trivialized by people running off to get a bit of press by releasing the information, then it will destroy the whole system.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest you look at this issue very seriously. If somebody is at fault here, then the proper action should be taken.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot begin to tell you how pleased I am to see the member for St. Albert stand in the House asking you to take appropriate action on a leak of a committee report by a member of the opposition. This is the pot calling the kettle black.

This issue started back in July 2002 on a CBC report. The chair of the committee himself made some very direct comments about an in camera meeting with one of the witnesses who had appeared before the committee. The reporter's name was Brown, and I quote:

Guite and Tremblay initially refused to appear before the public accounts committee and were issued what amounts to a subpoena. Many Liberals in the committee were also—

The chair himself stood up before the committee and said:

The Alliance MP [for St. Albert] says Guite felt as though there was a war going on between federalists and Quebec separatists and he was justified in doing anything he could through the ad program to help Ottawa's cause.

He continued:

Mr. Guite did feel that he was trying to save the country.

Routine Proceedings

It is not only the member for St. Albert who in fact spilled the beans after that committee meeting, but it was also a member of the Conservative Party, who is now leading candidate for the leadership of that party, as well as a member of the NDP who today made an attempt to get a press conference in order to issue a minority report on a report not yet made public, as well as a member from the Bloc Québécois at the time but who is no longer a member of the Bloc Québécois. This was done after we gave assurances to the lawyer representing that particular individual that nothing would be made public.

Mr. Speaker, I beg you to get to the bottom of this issue because those guys cannot suck and blow at the same time. That is exactly what they are trying to do. Please proceed, Mr. Speaker.

• (1515)

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt in my mind that you will get to the bottom of the issue.

I have been listening to the House leader for the New Democratic Party and I find it amazing how one of her members could call a press conference to dissent in a report that has not been completed yet and then cancel it. Mr. Speaker, I know you will get to the bottom of this issue and all members will be happy with your decision, as we always are.

Mr. Speaker, I know that Jack Layton, the new leader of the New Democratic Party is not yet a member of this place, but it may be worthwhile to send him a copy of our standing orders so he knows how we operate in the House. We do not play by stunts and we do not play by games. We play by the rules. I hope, Mr. Speaker, you will send him a copy of our standing orders as quickly as you can.

The Speaker: I thank all hon. members for their tremendous assistance on this dreadful issue facing the House.

We have heard quite a lot of complaints, not just about the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre but apparently a whole bunch of other members of the committee at different times and places.

The Chair is somewhat confused and will have to review the submissions of hon. members. I thank the hon. member for St. Albert for bringing the matter up, as well as the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast for his always helpful comments. I also thank the hon. member for Vancouver East, the hon. member for St. John's West, and the hon. member for Ottawa Centre for their assistance.

I will get back to the House in due course.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to nine petitions.

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34 I have the honour to present to the House a report from the Canadian branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association concerning the 14th seminar of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which was held in Andhra Pradesh, India from October 21 to 27, 2002.

* * *

• (1520)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 20th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House, and I intend to move concurrence in the report later this day.

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, of a procedural nature.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108, the committee adopted a resolution and agreed on Tuesday, February 4, to report to the House.

* * *

[English]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-351, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (exemptions for volunteers).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House to introduce my private member's bill. The bill calls upon the Government or Canada to amend the Income Tax Act and increase the tax exemption to \$2,500 available for persons providing certain volunteer services. Some volunteers mentioned more specifically are ambulance technicians, firefighters and anyone involved in search and rescue. Across the country, we understand the importance of volunteers in this sector. Therefore it is a pleasure to introduce this bill.

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

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 20th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House today be concurred in.

Supply

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

*[English]***PETITIONS**

BILL C-250

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have a petition that has been signed by people across my constituency and indeed from other places in Saskatchewan. The petitioners pray that Parliament does not pass private member's Bill C-250 as they feel it will be in violation of the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am very privileged to present a petition which is signed by just under 4,000 petitioners. The petitioners ask Parliament to amend the child pornography section of the Criminal Code by deleting the term artistic merit. Applying artistic merit can be associated with criminal sexual activity against citizens, especially children, in any form of expression, such as violence, children's rights, standards of respect for humanity, community standards and civilized society.

CANADA POST

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition also signed by people in my constituency, who call upon Parliament to repeal subsection 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 it is a pleasure and a privilege to present to the House a petition signed by concerned residents of Crowfoot, more specifically from Wainwright, Irma, Hardisty, Amisk and Hughenden.

The petition goes with the petition I presented last week with over 7,000 names on it. It calls upon Parliament to protect children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities involving children are outlawed.

It is easy to support a petition such as this which reflects, in my opinion, the majority of Canadians in condemning the creation and the use of pornography.

• (1525)

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. The first petition is from the area of Nanaimo largely and I imagine has 10 pages of signatures. The petition has to do with Bill C-415 originally, now known as Bill C-250.

The petitioners would like to draw the attention of the House to sexual orientation being added to the list of identifiable groups in the hate propaganda section of the Criminal Code of Canada. They would like Parliament to take note that the legislation does not define

hated. Public expression and moral disapproval of a sexual practice should not be judged as promoting hatred.

They are concerned that such an addition could frustrate fundamental freedoms to practise religion and could even make sections of the Bible considered hate literature if that were to be approved.

The second petition is from the ocean side communities of Nanaimo—Alberni riding and is similarly drawing to the attention of the House that the addition of sexual orientation as an explicitly protected category under Sections 318 and 319 of the Criminal Code would lead to individuals being unable to exercise their religious freedoms as protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The petitioners therefore call upon Parliament to protect the rights of Canadians to share their religious beliefs without fear of prosecution.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege today to present two petitions on behalf of the constituents of Edmonton Southwest. The first petition calls upon Parliament and the government to establish an independent public inquiry to shed light on the close links between the Liberal Party and some advertising agencies which have received hundreds of millions of dollars worth of contracts from the government in the past nine years.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with the very serious subject of child pornography. The petitioners call upon Parliament to protect our children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities involving children are outlawed.

* * *

*[Translation]***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[English]***SUPPLY**

ALLOTTED DAY—SENDING TROOPS TO IRAQ

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I must say that I was shocked with the remarks by the hon. member for Halifax. I have learned to be sort of inured by the kind of inanity that I hear from the NDP on foreign policy matters but this is really remarkable.

She spoke for 20 minutes about an international crisis provoked by Iraq's non-compliance with 16 United Nations Security Council resolutions over the course of 12 years bringing the civilized world to the brink of violent conflict. In the course of that 20 minutes not once did she condemn Iraq for its continued violation of its international obligations. She spent the entire 20 minutes attacking the United States, the United Kingdom and allied democracies for insisting that Iraq comply and come to terms with the requirements of international security. The member has the obligation entirely backward.

She said that Secretary Powell had not presented hard evidence at the UN Security Council last week to persuade her. What exactly would constitute hard evidence for the member? Should he haul a load of chemical weapon warheads into the UN Security Council chamber? Would that suffice?

Further, I would like the member to clarify whether she actually said this. I believe she said that we should have United Nations peacekeepers enter Iraq to stop Saddam Hussein's human rights abuses. Did she say that? If she did, what she is essentially advocating is the position she opposes. In other words, intervention in Iraq by foreign armed forces to force the Iraqi regime to comply with international law.

Finally, does she think the vote in this place by her predecessor as leader of the CCF, J.S. Woodsworth, in 1939 against the declaration of war with Germany, was morally and historically correct?

• (1530)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has raised about five or six issues and clearly I will not be allocated the amount of time necessary to respond.

Let me start with the very last question. I think the implication of the question is whether it is my position as the foreign affairs critic for the New Democratic Party, or is it the position of the NDP caucus, that we should take a totally pacifist view vis-à-vis the situation in Iraq. The answer is no. I made that clear in previous debates.

Second, the member is shocked that I did not use up my time in the debate about alternatives to war to once again talk about the demonic, diabolical, dictator Saddam Hussein. I do not see why any of us would spend all our time talking about something on which we agree. He is a dictator and demonic leader. The issue is not how many different ways we can describe that or how much of the House's time we can use up talking about that fact, but rather what is to be done about the situation.

Third, the member was very offended by my speech. I cannot say that it will cause me to lose any sleep this evening. However let me also remind the member that I was quoting extensively from the likes of former President Jimmy Carter, the current chair of the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Resuming debate, the hon. member for St. John's West.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, for the record I will read the motion because I am not sure whether anybody who has spoken recently has read it and because there are a lot of Canadians watching this debate who are extremely interested in what

is being said on this issue and who may not know exactly what we are debating.

The motion that has been put forth by the Bloc Québécois states:

That this House consider the sending of troops to Iraq by the government only after the United Nations Security Council has passed a resolution explicitly authorizing a military intervention in Iraq.

The ironic thing is that even though we are supposed to have parties that are on different sides of this entirely, if I heard rightly, and I listened carefully to those who spoke recently, if we pick what is behind what they are all saying, most of us are saying the same thing and very few of us are in total disagreement with the motion.

We are discussing this issue because the Bloc Québécois, and on Thursday last the Canadian Alliance Party, brought forth motions. It is unfortunate that our debates are restricted to motions brought forth by opposition parties.

We should be debating an issue that is so important to this nation because the government brought forth a motion to the House. Whether it would be similar to the one we have today or similar to the one we had last week, that would be irrelevant. However it should be a motion that would open up debate and would give the government some clear cut direction.

The House might ask why, when the government is elected to govern and the government will do whatever it wants to do. Certainly that is the view of the current government. There is absolutely no doubt about that. We have seen that in relation to every issue that has been brought before the House.

Times have changed since the war of 1914, the war of 1939 and the Korean conflict. These were wars that were fought in another country of which we knew little and saw nothing. Wars today are fought before our very eyes. The negotiations, the planning, the strategies and the conniving are all laid out beforehand.

Sometimes we wonder why everything is so secret. We tell people when we will invade, how we will invade, what we will do and what the results will be. It is a different world we live in.

Because of that, people across Canada are well aware of what is happening. Not only are they aware, they also are very concerned about what it happening. They all have opinions on what is happening and they would like those opinions addressed. They would like their views heard and their questions asked.

How can that be done? It can be done right here because this is the only forum in the country where these views can be discussed openly, where the questions can be asked and where we have the individuals who can give the legitimate answers. This is the only forum which represents all the people across this great country.

As I said, it is unfortunate that it had to be the opposition parties that forced the debate.

Having said that, I have listened, as I said, to the members of the different parties as they spoke. A while ago I heard the member for Wild Rose stand and say quite clearly that nobody wants a war, which is basically what the NDP is saying, which is what the Bloc Québécois is saying, which is what the Liberals are saying and which is what we are saying. Nobody wants a war.

Supply

● (1535)

Everyone also has said that if we must go to war that there is a proper mechanism for doing that. We may not agree totally on that mechanism but I suggest that our differences are little when really pushed.

To again quote the member for Wild Rose when he said “Nobody wants a war”, that would be everybody's choice. However do we then sit back and do nothing about looking at that side of the issue?

Where are the great leaders of the past? We always talk about the leaders of wartime, the heroes who led us through the battles, who won or who lost but who, in winning or losing, caused irreparable damage to their countries and to the people of their countries. Sometimes these things could not have been provided and nobody held their heads higher in these confrontations than Canadians. However there were other times in history when wars, which seemed imminent, were prevented by the intervention of our great negotiators, our great diplomats, our great leaders who found the way to find peace instead of war.

I will go back to the days of the cold war when Russia seemed to be the enemy of the western world. Day after day we sat, listened and waited to see if Mr. Krushchev, or some of the others during that time, would push the button that would destroy the world. We were in fear. Russia was our enemy.

In 1972, when the Russian hockey team came to Canada to play the first four games of a great hockey tournament, it was almost as if we were being invaded by the enemy. We looked upon them as our enemies because they were Russians. When we found out how good they were they became an even worse enemy.

When our hockey players went into Russia, we all shuddered because they were going into a foreign country and we did not know if they would ever get out. I am sure there were times during that last game that some of them asked themselves the same question.

However exchanges like that began to open up doors, through other mechanisms besides those directly involved in the war measures. The armed forces, people connected with security and people whose jobs it is to talk war and peace, prevention and destruction, these people have a job to do and they are narrowly focused in relation to doing that job.

It is true that exchanges, such as our hockey games and our cultural exchanges, began to open up doors. The more we began to learn about other nations, the more we saw that a lot of people in this world were the same. As the old saying goes, “both ends of the rifle are the same”. Throughout the world many of us are the same, given a chance to really understand the other.

That is where the great diplomats, the great leaders of our time moved in and took advantage of such a situation. Canada over the years has had tremendous leaders. One of them, former Prime Minister Pearson, won the Nobel Peace Prize. It was not because he always led us in war but because he worked for peace.

The parts of the equation that I see missing in this whole charade are the advantages we have today compared to the past to understand and to know. We seem to be closing our eyes and our minds to some of the opportunities to open doors.

If there is a way to prevent a war that is what we should be concentrating on, not how we should enter the war.

● (1540)

How should we enter the war? Should we go if the United States says go because we are its neighbour, its ally and we have always been there? We should ask that question because a lot of people have been asking that.

Should we wait for the United Nations to make the decision on whether to go to war? If we thumb our nose at the United Nations, what will be the end result of that great organization? That again is argued by a lot of people.

Should we just say that we are pacifists, that we want nothing to do with war and not go at all? Some people would say that is the answer. However, as we know, if we want to be a player in the free world, if we want to defend democracy and the free world that we have because other people went before and put their lives on the line for us and for our country, then we have to follow them.

We should try, if at all possible, to find a way to settle the issue with Iraq peacefully. If we cannot, then we should be guided by the United Nations and be involved if it gets involved. I would agree to that and would support the motion to that degree.

However, I do not think we should close doors. When we look at the type of individual with whom we are dealing, there is always the possibility that the United Nations Security Council could vote to enter the fray and disarm Saddam Hussein, or we could see one country objecting. What do we do then? Do we say that because it is not unanimous we will participate only if the United Nations, totally accepted by the Security Council, agrees to enter the fray?

We need to open the door and make our own decision based upon the events and the facts of the time. That is where real leadership comes in. That is where we have to trust our government and the people involved within the total process. That perhaps is what leaves a lot of us lying awake at night worrying about the whole situation.

Time is running out. We have heard that said too often quite recently. We have heard it said by President Bush almost daily. We all know time is running out. Iraq has been given notice. It has been asked to co-operate, and people might say that to some degree it has. To what degree? Hopefully within the next few days that answer will be clear.

However there is no doubt that unless there is a major peace initiative over the next few days by people experienced in the field, leaders who are respected, to convince Hussein to leave Iraq and to go into exile, which was discussed earlier, or to unequivocally open up and let the inspectors do their jobs, people will want to go to war. The decision will rest heavily on our shoulders as to what we are going to do.

It has been said that Canada's stand to date has left us completely marginalized. We were once a country that was such a player in the world, not only in wartime but more specifically in peacetime, but we are no longer that great player.

Why is that? A country is just a large portion of land. What makes a country work, what makes a country powerful and what makes a country influential is the population that lives within the boundaries of that great country.

• (1545)

It is the people who lived here before, the leaders who ran our governments and who represented us internationally, these were the people who in the past gave Canada that great name as a player in international relations, particularly in relation to a country that sought peace first and then war.

What is it we are really trying to do? Are we just trying to disarm Iraq? Are we trying to find an excuse to go to war? Or are we looking for some peaceful situation to defuse a very explosive situation in the Middle East? We tried before, 10 or 12 years ago, and some people say that we should have finished the job, but what were we trying to do then? Were we successful? Is it entirely different now? It probably is, because it is a lot more serious now.

The interest that has built up in the destruction of the world, not just different parts of it, through terrorism, in particular over the last few years and since 9/11, has created such an awareness that people throughout the world are ready to participate in avenues of mass destruction. They just do not care, individually or collectively. They are out to get even. We might ask, get even for what? With proper discussions, those questions could be answered and maybe some of the people who are so caught up in their tunnel vision of destroying people they think are destroying them might realize that this is not the way it should be.

The unfortunate thing about all of this is that the leaders who eventually will make this decision have an awful weight on their shoulders. Hopefully it is some avenue of peace they can find, but if they go to war and our aim is to get Hussein, then the question is, how many have to pay the price in the interim?

Again I have a quote from an old song: It is not the ones who give the orders who are the first to die. That is always the case. Maybe if those who are going to make that decision look upon themselves as being the leaders in battle instead of saying "Go on, my troops, I am right behind you", which is what most leaders do, then they might think twice about making such a decision.

I congratulate the Bloc Quebecois for bringing forth the resolution so that we can debate it and hear what others think of the part that Canada should play, our own views and the views of the people we represent. We must proceed with caution. I believe the steps must be: peace if at all possible, and if not, confrontation with others, not in some half-cocked manner. But if the time comes when a war has to be fought, then Canada cannot shirk its duties.

• (1550)

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for St. John's West for his remarks.

Supply

First I would like to note that the motion itself is flawed.

[*Translation*]

The motion says consider. The House is always considering something.

I think the motion should have read, "That this House approve the sending of troops to Iraq by the government only after the United Nations Security Council has passed a resolution explicitly authorizing a military intervention in Iraq".

[*English*]

I believe what was intended, though, was that the government or Parliament should only approve or even debate sending troops to Iraq if a Security Council resolution suggests that this is something we should be doing. In other words, I believe the motion is intended to forestall the unilateral use of force in Iraq and that Canada should join the United States in that circumstance.

In that context, I believe and as a matter of fact the polls show that the majority of Canadians are opposed to Canada following the United States into a war in Iraq without United Nations approval. Indeed, the latest polls indicate that from 70% to 78% of Canadians oppose this.

I would ask the member opposite, is this a situation where MPs should follow the dictates of their conscience, obey the suggestions of their constituents and not support going into Iraq without a UN Security Council resolution?

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Mr. Speaker, let me thank the hon. member for his question. The hon. member has raised an extremely important question, a question which perhaps is at the crux of the reason why we are here, at the crux of what we are supposed to do.

Very few people across the country would have the intimate knowledge of what is going on that the members in this House have, or should have, particularly if government were forthcoming with the pertinent information. As we, or if we, and hopefully we would not, approach a time of crisis, the government should make sure that Parliament is well informed and well briefed about what is going on so that as representatives of the people we can make a decision.

When the crunch comes, there is no way in this world we are going to be able to poll all our constituents to get a majority of support. We were sent here to represent our constituents. They sent us here because they trust our judgment. They trust we will make the right decision based upon the right information.

As for an answer to the question, it is not a black or white answer. When the information comes forward and when the decision time comes, if it is not to go there undoubtedly will not be a problem. If it is to go, with or without the United Nations, when the crisis comes, then that is when government is going to have to look long and hard and is going to have to depend upon the wisdom of Parliament to direct it. All I can say because of the type of situation in which we are immersed is that we will have to use our best judgment based upon the facts at hand. I would think our people would place their judgment in us to make that decision.

Supply

• (1555)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my colleague from the Progressive Conservatives. I listened quite attentively. He laid out some of the problems with the motion, in that if it were passed it would hamstring the position of the government to adhere to any possible involvement in some future conflict with Iraq, to be forced to adhere only if there were another, and I stress another, UN resolution. We have already had some dozen or so over the last 11 or 12 years that have not been complied with.

My concern, and a concern that I hear, is the fear that if something is not done at some point, and I alluded to this in my speech last week on this very issue, the UN could follow the demise of the League of Nations, which collapsed after its failure to prevent the dictators Mussolini and Hitler from gobbling up territory prior to the second world war.

I noticed that the hon. member said we have to proceed with caution. None of us want war. We and the member have said that, but I think that if we respect the UN we are going to have to at some point in time force compliance on the part of Iraq. I would like him to address that.

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Mr. Speaker, again one of the things I have noticed about the debate today, unlike many debates we have had, is that it is serious and to the point. We do not get the flippant remarks and questions and the sarcasm usually thrown forth during these times.

The question raised by the hon. member is an extremely interesting and important one. When he talks about the future of the United Nations, there are two concerns as I see it. First, if the United Nations does not get involved and we do have a crisis because of Iraq, then of course the United Nations is going to be useless in the eyes of most of the world. On the other hand, if the United Nations is right in the decision it makes and the U.S. or others go off without being under the auspices of the United Nations, then we will question the power of the United Nations.

It is a very trying time for the organization, the United Nations itself. I believe it is a time when the decision makers within that august body are going to have to make sure that the decision they make is the right one. If not, they are going to be looked upon either as letting dictators like Saddam Hussein move in to take over the free world, as others have tried in the past, or as being so weak in making a decision that countries such as the United States and others, to prevent that, have to go on their own without the UN being part of it.

Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I want to say that I appreciate the remarks of the hon. member for St. John's West. Obviously he has reflected long and hard on this very difficult issue. The fact that he urges caution is indicative of that.

The member talks about not closing doors. I think that is certainly the position of the government, and it certainly is my position that we should use every opportunity to us to prevent war, to find a peaceful solution through the United Nations. This is what the Government of Canada has done. The Government of Canada is committed to the UN process. I disagree with anyone who suggests that Canada has been marginalized. The Prime Minister has met with

many world leaders. I think he has played a significant role in this UN process.

I want to ask the hon. member for St. John's West about the motion itself. It seems to me that if we were to pass the motion it would in a sense compromise the executive powers of the federal government. It is the federal government, I assume, that through its diplomatic efforts knows more and has more information than ordinary citizens do and certainly more than we MPs do. Does the member feel that this kind of motion would compromise the executive power of the federal government?

• (1600)

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Mr. Speaker, the quick answer to that is yes. Certainly any motion passed in the House which dictates to the government what to do compromises the powers of government. Whether we like it or not, government is elected to govern.

However, governments should govern based upon what their people want. If the dictates of the people, through their representatives in Parliament, are pointed in a certain direction, then undoubtedly it is something that government should look at and respect. However, if because of its almighty wisdom, which in this case I question very much, the government feels otherwise, then all I can say is that the government will have to pay for any decision it makes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think you will find that there is unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion, all questions necessary to dispose of the said motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, February 11, 2003, at 3 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to indicate that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Québec.

I am proud to speak on this motion, whose meaning is clear. It asks that Parliament and the government only send troops if there is a UN resolution authorizing the use of military intervention.

This motion is important because it allows us to discuss the basis of the position we have held and the basis of the opposition of the public everywhere. It is important to note that at this time support for this apprehended war is extremely weak except—it must be said—in the United States.

Elsewhere, there is opposition; in Europe, Canada—other colleagues have just commented on this—or in Quebec, where 49% are against war, even after a second UN resolution.

Is the public always against war? No. I remember Kosovo, the ethnic cleansing seen there and the desire for military intervention to prevent it. The Bloc Québécois was very clear about this.

Our position is not to say no to war, but to clearly establish the importance of going through the United Nations at this extremely important and historic moment. Some say that resolution 1441 alone allows for military intervention under international law.

In fact, there are very few countries that claim this. However, many say—and this is especially true at the Security Council—that a second resolution is needed to authorize the use of military force to disarm Saddam Hussein.

Under these circumstances, wanting Canada to send troops only if there is such a resolution, is basically wanting to give peace every chance by giving the United Nations every opportunity to disarm Saddam Hussein by pressuring him to comply with the requirements of resolution 1441.

I would like to remind the House that the inspections process from 1991 to 1998 was effective. This has not been said enough. I would like to quote a text by Charles-Philippe David and one of his colleagues. Mr. David is director of the Raoul-Dandurand Chair at the University of Montreal. The text reads as follows:

UNSCOM's surprise inspections seem to have produced tangible results. UNSCOM will have destroyed more materials of mass destruction since 1991 than the entire coalition forces during the Gulf War in 1991. UNSCOM is estimated to have destroyed 48 SCUD missiles, 30 chemical and biological warheads, 60 launchers, almost 40,000 bombs and chemical shells, 690 tons of chemical agents and all Al-Hakam's biological weapons factories. Furthermore, UNSCOM forced Iraq to hide its weapons of mass destruction rather than developing them.

In his speech on Saturday, Kofi Annan also spoke of the effectiveness of UNSCOM and the United Nations inspections. So, these inspections have been effective.

● (1605)

Resolution 1441 has two basic components: demanding that Saddam Hussein actively disarm and trusting a new team to ensure disarmament and verify that disarmament is carried out properly.

Why would we now agree with President Bush, when he says, "The game is over?". Honestly, I and the many constituents I saw in my riding this weekend think that this is not a game and that it is not over.

I must point out the importance of having the public's support in seeking a peaceful solution. Many people do not understand the relationship between disarmament that is slower than desirable, but that is continuing all the same, and the urgency of going to war, but not with just any means.

The Pentagon has said—whether it is true or just a ploy—that it will launch 3,000 bombs in 48 hours on the palaces which, as we know, are in Baghdad and in the cities, and then send troops into Baghdad.

Mere mention of this evokes horror. It must be kept in mind that the Iraqi people have suffered numerous wars since they have been

Supply

under the heel of the dictator. They suffered during the 1990-91 war and under the embargo. Is there any urgency to launching into unrestrained war that does not even exclude the possibility of nuclear arms, rather than pursuing, for a limited period and not indefinitely, the disarmament process?

Thanks to France, Germany and Russia, which support the inspection process, an improved method has been proposed to help the inspectors to move ahead with this disarmament. France, Germany and Russia are going to table a resolution to ensure that, by stepping up technical and even military means, the intended objective can be met.

I want to make it clear that many find the legitimacy of this potential war somewhat dubious. For the war to gain legitimacy, there must of course be a certainty that it is legal under international law, that is there must be a second resolution, but also the objectives of the war must be made clear to all.

Is the great haste just to disarm Saddam Hussein, or could there be other objectives? I am not saying it is not the primary objective, but might there be others.

There might be such objectives as the desire to control gas and oil, most certainly with a view to ensuring U.S. hegemony. The United States' motive may be understandable, but rushing headlong into war cannot be accepted when other approaches are possible.

Being aware of those objectives does not, of course, mean sharing them. In order for there to be any legitimacy, as I have already suggested, there has to be a proper balance between the danger and resorting to war. International law does not permit pre-emptive strikes nor a war to overthrow a leader.

Peace must be given every possible chance and we must foresee any undesired consequences, such as making it hard to continue the war against terrorism, which is far more important.

● (1610)

We need to be able to count on the support of the Arab and Muslim countries and on public support. At this point in time, the consequences of a war, under the present circumstances, might be truly catastrophic.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague, the member for Mercier, I am very proud to talk about sending troops to Iraq. Like my colleague, I have seen that people have indeed accepted that we find strategies for peace instead of strategies involving sending troops to Iraq.

People find it hard to understand Canada's position on this important issue. Canada's position seems ambiguous. Canada is waiting to see what its neighbour will do. People expect us to take a stand here, in the House; they want a free vote on this issue.

The choice before us, for war or for peace, must be made at the United Nations. The best thing we can do, according to UN inspectors, is to give inspectors the time to do their work and allow Saddam Hussein to listen to reason for the good of the world.

Supply

In this context, the United States dominating another country is unjustified. The attitude of the U.S. shows that it is trying to pull a fast one over us, and Quebeckers and Canadians and people around the world are well aware of what is going on.

According to the final paragraph of resolution 1441, the United Nations, through the Security Council, must assess the evidence and then make a decision. Mr. Bush does not seem worried about this, and that is what is dangerous. Who needs evidence? The U.S. will go in anyway. Saddam Hussein's bad faith alone justifies the United States' intervention. How can Canada not clearly state whether or not it intends to support the United States?

We in the House must be able to vote on the appropriateness of sending troops to Iraq. Parliamentarians must also be allowed to assess the Security Council's evidence. We cannot take a position at this stage.

Canada is missing an opportunity to have its voice heard before hostilities break out on the ground. We are calling on this government to add to the debate, as France, Belgium, Germany and Russia are doing. The government should announce its true intentions.

I understand why Canada might not want to offend and therefore support its neighbour, the U.S. However, Canada must tell its neighbour that it is on the wrong track, that this is not the best idea it has had.

The attitude of the U.S. in this conflict is imperialist. Look how Mr. Rumsfeld criticized Europe today, how he said that Europe is not inclined to respect human rights in Iraq. That is ridiculous and lacks credibility.

Their goal is not to attack the government of Saddam Hussein, the people are not fooled that easily. Oil may be one of their goals, but their influence over the Middle East might be another one.

Washington is getting restless. The Security Council has its back against the wall. The moment of truth has come for the United Nations. Here is what Mr. Bush and his administration have to say. Soon, the United Nations will have to decide if they have what it takes to maintain peace. Such arrogance on the part of the United States.

Will sending troops be a more effective way to maintain peace? I doubt it. In what way is the U.S. attitude better for maintaining peace than UN inspections? The U.S. does not care about the United Nations; quite often, it has not fulfilled its obligations to this organization. It corrected this just before a war with Iraq. One has to wonder about the confidence they have in this organization.

The U.S. has opted, of course, for the logic of war. For instance, by mid-January, it had submitted a list of requests for support to NATO, measures to protect Turkey, one of Iraq's neighbours. Does this not prove that, as early as mid-January, the U.S. had adopted a logic of war?

So, what is going on in Baghdad? According to both chief inspectors, Messrs. Blix and ElBareidi, the Iraqi authorities have released new disarmament documentation. Cooperation has improved.

●(1615)

I believe we should also listen to the public. Some 46% of Canadians are opposed to sending troops, with or without a UN resolution. Another 43% of them would support a U.S. action, should there be a UN resolution. We must be extremely careful and listen to the public, and hopefully Canada will also.

Let us not be swayed by arguments meant to influence public opinion. Some say, for instance, that it would help resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; I do not think so. We are told that there are links with al-Qaeda. These two regimes are fighting, they are enemies. Even the CIA is trying to convince Bush not to go there.

They want us to believe they are doing it to protect human rights in Iraq. I do not buy that. It will be urban warfare and hundreds of thousands of people will perish in Iraq. We must be vigilant.

Like my colleague from Mercier, I believe inspections must be allowed to go on, to take place, with more people on the ground as demanded by the new arms inspectors in Iraq.

Being opposed to the war in Iraq does not mean that we believe it is legitimate to possess arms of mass destruction or nuclear weapons. Nor does it mean that Saddam Hussein is acting in good faith, that his regime is not undemocratic and is not guilty of human rights violations. The choice is not between doing nothing or going to war, but rather between going to war or preventing it. I believe that the UN arms inspectors are leaning that way.

France, Germany and Belgium seem to be leaning that way too. This is what various governments in the world are being told by their citizens. What can justify war? Even the U.S. Constitution says that it can only be in self-defence or in case of necessity. That is certainly not the case now.

We need hard evidence. Evidence that something is true, that it can be proven as such. We need concrete, tangible, formal proof and incriminating evidence. It needs to be proven that Iraq possesses arms of mass destruction. Every site was inspected and nothing was found. According to several scientific observers, it is scientifically impossible for Iraq to have arms of mass destruction. After the country was disarmed in 1991, all its sites were destroyed.

Will countries give their approval based on assumptions made by the United States and its British ally? I hope not. This is why we need help from people. Those who want real peace strategies should speak out.

Are circumstances in which one country can attack another not defined in international law? It is called *casus belli*.

Does the fact that a country possesses weapons of mass destruction justify an attack on that country? If the answer is yes, there would be more than one war today on this planet. Does Israel not possess such weapons, as well as North Korea, India and Pakistan? This is why we have to find other long term solutions to ensure that countries that possess such weapons are under close scrutiny by the United Nations. We must develop strategies based on maintaining peace. A diplomatic strategy is more reassuring than what the United States is preparing to do by attacking Iraq. That is what Washington wants.

What is on the table is a willingness on the part of Saddam Hussein to cooperate more fully; he agrees to be more open. Certainly we must be careful. We must increase the number of inspectors and intensify the inspection process.

A strategy based on means to avoid this war seems far removed from the options lined up by Washington. This is cause for concern. In this context, Canada should encourage the Americans not to pursue their war plan.

The Americans are probably thinking that they must not lose face, since their troops are already there. Their actions will surely be dictated by their ego. Canada should be among those countries trying to influence the United States in order to prevent a massacre that would cost hundreds of lives. Saddam Hussein must be driven against the wall by inspections, not by bombs.

• (1620)

[English]

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot.

In his state of the union address President George Bush said that Saddam Hussein used weapons of mass destruction on whole villages “leaving thousands of his own citizens dead, blind or disfigured”.

The president failed to mention that the United States supplied tonnes of VX nerve gas to Iraq in the 1980s—back when Iraq and the U.S. were buddy-buddy. On the very day that the UN confirmed Iraq's use of chemical weapons the U.S. envoy to Iraq, none other than Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, was in Baghdad to normalize diplomatic relations with Iraq, offer support for the war against Iran, and subsidies on preferential trade with Iraq.

In his state of the union address President Bush said:

International human rights groups have catalogued other methods used in the torture chambers of Iraq... If this is not evil, then evil has no meaning.

He was absolutely right. However, according to Amnesty International, the Philippines, an ally of the U.S. in the war against terrorism, uses techniques of torture such as electro shocks and the use of plastic bags to suffocate detainees. Members of the poor, or marginalized communities, including women and children who are suspected of committing criminal acts are particularly vulnerable.

Will we bomb the Philippines and any other nation that tortures its citizens? While we should be addressing these issues, bombing innocent people and further victimizing them is not the answer.

Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld said the UN would lose all credibility if it did not support an attack on Iraq and that it would go the way of the League of Nations, and become irrelevant and die. I do not believe the U.S. administration wants a restructured and stronger UN as Canada and many other countries do. It has consistently refused to pay its dues and undermines the UN in countless other ways.

The U.S. administration does not believe in taking a multilateral approach to international problems. It refuses to support the International Criminal Court and the ratification of the treaty that

Supply

would ban landmines that kill and maim thousands of innocent civilians every year.

When I hear the U.S. administration say it would hold the oil fields in trust for the Iraqi people I question what this proposed war is really all about. Would it be so intent on taking control of Iraq if recent reports had not indicated that Iraq has more oil than Saudi Arabia. I do not think so.

In his attempt to persuade the Security Council to authorize an attack on Iraq Secretary of State Colin Powell heaped praise on a British intelligence document which, he said, described in exquisite detail Iraqi deception activities.

An embarrassed British government admitted last Friday that large parts of the intelligence dossier on Iraq were copied from published academic articles, some of which were several years old, and some of the words were deliberately changed to strengthen the argument for war. That means the secretary of state for the most powerful nation on earth based part of his last ditch argument for an attack on Iraq on plagiarized information based on documents that were more than 12 years old.

Saddam Hussein is a despot and a tyrant. He is that and more, but bombing and killing innocent people is not the answer. I said bombing and killing, not collateral damage as the Pentagon describes it. If America were to attack Iraq real flesh and blood, children, mothers and fathers would be bombed to bits. What happened to the war against al-Qaeda and the war against terrorism? We were going to root them out of all of their cells. We knew this would be a long and arduous task. Perhaps it is easier and more high profile to attack Iraq.

Senator Edward Kennedy recently said that America cannot expect the international community to salute the American flag and march with it to war when the administration has failed to make a convincing case for doing so. The Democrats and the majority of the American people do not support an attack on Iraq. Many Americans agree with Senator Kennedy that the terrorist threat posed by al-Qaeda and North Korea's nuclear capability require more immediate attention than Iraq.

• (1625)

We know George Bush wants to get rid of Saddam, but there must be a way to deal with that without killing innocent people. If regime change is what the Americans want, I am sure they know how to go about that without killing innocent civilians. War, with or without the UN, is not the best answer.

Even if the UN eventually does say yes to war, that would be because it is being bent and twisted to accommodate the demands of the U.S. administration. There are other voices offering better solutions and those voices must be heard. We should be focusing our attention on bringing about peace in the Middle East, not aggravating the hostilities in that region, as I believe an attack on Iraq would do.

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In closing, I want to speak on behalf of families in Iraq who could be bombed to bits by U.S. warplanes before the end of this month. They bear no responsibility whatsoever for whether the government of Iraq is or is not complying with UN resolution 1441. They have no say whatsoever on what their government does or does not do on the world stage or in the immediate region. All their energies are focused on surviving as best they can in a land devastated by non-stop wars and the life-crippling sanctions that have been imposed on their country.

I have neither seen nor heard anything over the last few months of debate that would justify taking the life of a single Iraqi citizen. I can see no basis on which the House, the Government of Canada, the United Nations Security Council, or the United States and its allies can justify burying entire families beneath the debris of bombed apartment buildings.

I urge all members of the House to keep their mind's eye on the families in Iraq. Let us think of a young girl playing on the dusty street outside a rundown apartment building. Let us think of her growing up, getting married and having children, sons and daughters. Then let us think of her young life being snuffed out before the end of this month by a bomb dropped from an American warplane. Let us think of that young girl. She deserves to live. Do not let her die.

• (1630)

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the remarks of my hon. colleague opposite reflect once again that knee-jerk Liberal anti-Americanism can sometimes be so thick that it prevents serious objective consideration of serious foreign policy threats to the security of the world.

The hon. member opposite suggested that the crisis which the world now faces is simply a question of American unilateral imperialism, a desire to control Iraqi oil, and so on. She did not for one moment reflect on the 12 years of efforts to cause the Iraqi regime to comply with the requirements of 16 United Nations Security Council resolutions. She did not mention that 12 years of sanctions have failed to produce a meaningful result. She did not mention that Iraq, according to resolution 1441, is in violation of its ceasefire obligations from 1990.

I would like the member to respond to the following comment. It states:

Canada should be using its influence within the United Nations to persuade the members of the Security Council to at last do the right thing and authorize the removal of the Iraqi war criminal. It is crucial that the Security Council authorize any action for one cannot enforce the ethics of international law by breaking international law. Saddam Hussein deserves a reckoning: Canada must do everything it can to bring him to justice, not because of American—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member for Beaches—East York.

Hon. Maria Minna: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is trying to suggest that this is anti-American. It has nothing to do with being anti-American. It has to do with dealing specifically with a situation which yes, it has been 12 years and it has taken time, but there are inspectors in Iraq today.

The United States wants to have a U.S. led aggression. Canada was one of the countries that said no. We said that we work through

the United Nations. It is important to maintain the integrity and the strength of the UN system, the multilateral system.

Inspectors are in Iraq and until such time as there is a chance to continue to inspect we should give peace a chance.

Why have we not looked at what this might do in the region? We talk about urban warfare door to door. We talk about cutting off power and water. Have we thought about the possibility of hundreds of thousands of refugees, of the possibility of igniting war in the Muslim world in that area? Have we talked about what that would mean in terms of increasing and igniting further al-Qaeda? By the way not only is it probably linked to Saddam Hussein, but I understand it has links to 60 countries. Have we thought about the ramifications of this action before we even try to do it?

It is not as simple as getting up one morning and deciding we will go over there and hit hard and it is over the next day with no casualties and nobody will be killed. There will be civilians in Iraq that will be killed. They will die of dysentery and probably of famine. Many Iraqis will leave that country and will end up in refugee camps. We do not know what the reaction will be in the whole region. We are talking about an extremely sensitive area. Meanwhile North Korea has openly said, "We have nuclear weapons and we do not want you guys to bother us".

What the member is saying is let us go right now. The member's position is to go unilaterally with the U.S. My position is that we wait, we work and we allow the process to work. We have to allow the peace process to work.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I find this strange. We all know of the horrors of war. There is nothing good about war at all.

I wonder where the member was when Saddam Hussein destroyed 200,000 people in his own country, women and children. There was great suffering and horror.

It is agreed that the man should be brought to justice. How does the member think it should be done when he has an entire military force of over one million people in Iraq behind him? What is the solution? How do we get Saddam Hussein to answer to these horrible crimes?

• (1635)

Hon. Maria Minna: Mr. Speaker, I said very clearly in my speech that, yes, he did kill thousands of his own people. At that time the U.S. said nothing when the UN was busy dealing with it. The U.S. was there normalizing its relations with Iraq because that is what suited it at the time. Not all the world was upset.

Right now I am saying we have to ensure that Saddam Hussein lives up to UN resolution 1441. We do not have to do it by bombing. We can do it through inspections. There is still time. There is no emergency for us to go to war tomorrow. Why do we have to go to war tomorrow? Why can we not give the process the chance it deserves in order—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the time has expired.

Supply

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very important debate, principally because the Americans are listening. Canada and the United States have been the best of friends since the second world war, the most intimate of friends, sharing their deepest secrets on intelligence and weapons development and atomic energy. The Americans trust the Canadians and when one has a trusted friend, the best thing that trusted friend can do is tell it as that trusted friend sees it. The reality is that Canada really does see a problem with the prospect of unilateral action by the Americans in Iraq.

I accept the findings of Colin Powell. I accept that Mr. Bush wants to settle the problem of Iraq for honourable reasons. It is true, as the member for Wild Rose just said, that Saddam Hussein is an awful dictator and there are many, many reasons why we should hope that there should be a regime change. I am not so sure that the threat posed by Iraq is a threat as serious as North Korea, which I think is a very, very dangerous threat, but nevertheless we have to accept that the Americans have the very best intentions in this proposal to attack Iraq and the proposal to attack Iraq regardless of the decision of the UN Security Council.

Now, here is the problem and I hope the people in the American embassy are watching and listening. If the UN Security Council rejects a unilateral attack or an attack on Iraq because there is not sufficient evidence and if this government, as it has the power to do, decides it will join a unilateral attack on Iraq, I will be one of the first on this side of the House to try to vote no confidence in my government.

The way our system works right now is the government, the executive, has the right to declare war and I agree with that principle, but it also must face Parliament. The reason why I would have to press no confidence in my government if it supported a unilateral attack on Iraq is because 66% of Canadians are opposed to such action and the total number of Canadians who are opposed to an attack on Iraq is about 80%.

You cannot have democracy two ways, Mr. Speaker. Either we represent the interests of our constituents and the will of our constituents, or we do not. When the feeling of constituents is so overwhelming against a war in Iraq, then a parliamentarian must listen.

Mr. Speaker, I would observe that this overwhelming opposition to a unilateral attack on Iraq does not stop at Canada. According to the *Christian Science Monitor*, 90% of Europeans are opposed to a unilateral attack on Iraq. If we go down the figures, Mr. Speaker, we find in Germany 80% are against a U.S. led unilateral attack on Iraq; 75% of the French; 90% of Turks, even though they have had to come to an arrangement with respect to air bases, but that is self defence. But the reality is the people in these countries are overwhelmingly opposed; and 66% of people in the U.K.

What I would implore the U.S. president to consider is: it is not a question of what the world leaders are saying; it is a question of what the ordinary people in the world are saying. They have seen a presentation by Colin Powell. They are not convinced that it justifies an attack on Iraq unilaterally without UN support. If they feel that, Mr. Speaker, and the United States goes ahead, what will be lost is

enormous credibility on the part of the Americans and goodwill in the world.

The difficulty is when you are a superpower, you labour under the disability of always being perceived as a bully. And when you are a superpower it becomes more and more incumbent upon you to work with others in order to achieve legitimate aims. We can say that a regime change in Iraq is a legitimate aim, but it is not legitimate in world opinion if it is done unilaterally by the world's superpower.

What I fear so much, Mr. Speaker, is the aftermath of Iraq might settle the problem of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, but I am afraid it will unleash a kind of cultural hatred that will spread around the world and the hatred will be against American culture. That is the fear. That is the danger that the Americans are running.

• (1640)

The cost of that in American assets alone is dreadful to contemplate, not only in the loss of investments abroad, not only in the fact that Americans will not be able to travel freely abroad because they will be afraid of attack not just from Muslims and the various dictatorships of the world, but also those people in other lands who already have suspicions about American culture, who are already afraid of an American culture that spreads across the planet.

Most of all, what will be lost? What will be lost is the ability of the Americans to say to the world, "We stand for freedom. We stand for the rights of everyone. We stand for working together for world peace". That is what they will lose and it will be the biggest loss of all.

If the terrorists ever had a hope of destabilizing the world and hurting the United States, that hope will be fulfilled if the Americans invade Iraq without the support of the UN Security Council.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, as always I enjoyed listening to the member. He has a thoughtful point of view. He believes passionately and is always ready to bring his feelings and his understanding of the situation to the House and I respect him for that.

We have to be careful of the language we use in what we are discussing today. I realize that most of us participating here today are not ministers of the Crown and do not have to be as careful as others, but the previous speaker on the Liberal side talked about the problem being American aggression. The member talked about the problem of the unilateral action of the Americans.

If it happens, it will not be a unilateral action of the Americans. Already 25 countries have said that if necessary, in order to enforce resolution 1441, which is not about finding weapons of mass destruction and doing something about them, but is about the Iraqis bringing that to the table, serious consequences are in order. It will be a multilateral approach. The Americans will certainly head it up but it will be a large coalition. I suspect Canada will be part of it.

Mr. John Bryden: Mr. Speaker, through you to the hon. member, consider this scenario.

Supply

If the UN Security Council holds a vote and action is vetoed, Britain has committed itself to joining the Americans should the Americans go ahead with action in Iraq. If that were to occur and British soldiers were committed to an American attack force in Iraq, what would happen to Tony Blair? It is very apparent.

Where it requires a vote of confidence to remove a prime minister in this country, the British prime minister can be removed simply by a vote of his own caucus. I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Blair has so little support not only in his own country but in his own caucus, that he would probably not last more than a couple of weeks. The wounding, the impact that would have on the position of the United States president and the validity of his attack on Iraq, if the British prime minister was fired from his job as a result of supporting the Americans, would be profoundly negative. It would be a terrible blow to American foreign policy and its image abroad.

• (1645)

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of attending the 39th conference on peace and security in Munich, Germany. It was interesting to listen to the comments of Donald Rumsfeld, Senator Lieberman and Senator McCain.

Make no mistake about it, one way or another, Saddam Hussein and his regime will be disarmed. The question is, how do we do it? One of the concerns I asked in the coffee room afterward was what is the post-Saddam plan?

The war will turn out to be the easiest thing to do. With the military might of the Americans and the British, they will walk in and clean up fairly reasonably. Countries such as Bulgaria, Iran and many others in the surrounding area are very concerned as to what will happen to the possible thousands of refugees. We heard from a member from southeast Asia who indicated that there would be an unleashing of hatred by over 200 million Muslims in Asia. They are very concerned about what the future will be in that regard.

I ask the member, what important role does the government play in making sure that any action, not just multilateral action by Britain and the United States, be done with the full support of the UN?

Mr. John Bryden: Mr. Speaker, if I may sum up, the point of the war with Iraq is that it has to have the support of the people of the world. If it does not have the support of the people of the world, they will lose confidence in the United States. It is not enough for leaders to decide. We have to bring along not only the Americans but people across the world. Right now, it would appear the majority of people are opposed to the war in Iraq seen as necessary by the United States.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I want to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my new colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay.

I am very pleased to take part in this debate, which is of the utmost importance to our work, to democracy and to peace. I feel the need to read the motion brought forward by the Bloc Québécois:

That this House consider the sending of troops to Iraq by the government only after the United Nations Security Council has passed a resolution explicitly authorizing a military intervention in Iraq.

I am very happy, because it is an important debate that deals with one of the main issues relating to the role of the United Nations and the need for the United Nations not only to be respected, but to be involved in this decision.

Indeed, with the evolution of the world and of mankind, we are supposed to have gone beyond the days when a state, however powerful, would unilaterally decide to declare war, with everything that that implies, on another sovereign state.

Those days in the history of mankind are long gone, and the League of Nations, which later became the United Nations, was given the authority and the mandate to examine and assess the merit of any decision to attack another sovereign state.

This is what today's debate is all about. The role of the United Nations has to be respected. This organization is the guardian of international law, and that is no small task. We know what human nature is like. We can see what goes on in the Liberal Party, and we can see what goes on at the UN as well. There can be bargaining, but the authority to approve war rests with the UN, after discussions and after looking at whatever bargaining there may have been between countries. We can also see bargaining elsewhere, for example between states and between governments, where they say, "You give me this and I will give you that".

Still, despite all of this, we need to respect the United Nations, because it is our best achievement so far. To act without the consent of the UN would be a travesty and a denial of justice. As implied in the motion, the role of the UN as sole repository of international law must be recognized, and anyone who does not respect the authority of the UN should eventually bear the brunt of it.

This issue raises a lot of concerns. I have received a lot of submissions from various groups in my riding that I will mention briefly: MagnificArt, École Bois-Joli of Trois-Rivières-Ouest, where some twenty students wrote to me, as did students from the École Saint-François-d'Assise. I might read some of these letters later on. Also, 11 organizations from the Mauricie, under the aegis of the Comité de Solidarité Tiers-Monde, got together to criticize the attitude exhibited and the threats made by the Americans.

The following organizations supported the initiative of Brian Barton, chairman of the Comité de Solidarité Tiers-Monde, in the hope of finding a pacific resolution to this problem: the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste of the Mauricie, the Centre de femmes of Shawinigan, in the Prime Minister's riding, the Centre d'action bénévole of Shawinigan, the Centre Roland-Bertrand, also of Shawinigan, the Conseil central Coeur-du-Québec of the CSN, the Table de concertation du mouvement des femmes de la Mauricie, the Office diocésain de pastorale de Trois-Rivières, the Fédération des syndicats du secteur de l'aluminium, namely the FSSA of Mauricie, the Syndicat de l'enseignement des vieilles Forges de la Mauricie, the COMSEP group, which is doing a great job in the area of literacy training, and the Corporation de développement communautaire de Francheville.

These organizations are quite representative of our society. They are against this almost unstoppable movement, this determination to go to war at all costs, without establishing the legitimacy or the necessity of such a war. And this is another aspect of this issue.

Supply

• (1650)

I was speaking earlier to students in grade four at Saint-François-d'Assise school who had sent me letters to pass on to the Prime Minister, which I did.

I will read you the one, for example, written by little Maude Langlois, who is in grade four; she wrote the following:

I think that violence is not the best way to fix things. We do not have to go to war. I am scared. I do not want to die so young. If we go to war and we lose, what will we do?

I think this letter shows that there is fear and dissatisfaction. The crux of the problem, in my opinion as a citizen and as a parliamentarian, is that the need for this aggression or war, or the legitimacy of this war, has not been demonstrated. Its legitimacy was not demonstrated by Tony Blair a few weeks ago nor by Colin Powell last week.

Both times, there was a lamentable failure, I believe, to make the case. They only convinced people who were already convinced. They did not present any truly new evidence to prove the real threat posed by Saddam Hussein and his government to the Western world.

That is the crux of the matter: the legitimacy and the need for this war have not been demonstrated. That is why, currently, throughout the world, there are protests, and polls in Quebec and elsewhere show that the public does not support aggression.

There were protests in Paris, Beijing, Moscow and across the continent. There were protests in Montreal, and there will be more to show that people do not agree. In Quebec, 49% of the population say that, even with the UN's approval, Canada should not participate in this war. This is extremely telling.

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew: Is that your opinion?

Mr. Yves Rochelleau: This reflects concern and dissatisfaction, and increasingly calls into question the democratic representativeness of our parliaments. Perhaps the minister should show an interest in this.

What is the government up to? I do not want to think about Berlusconi's situation, when protests will begin in Rome. When this right-wing government is so easily won over by Tony Blair, we must wish him luck. Democracy and real representativeness are at stake.

There is a widening gap between our Parliament and democracy. What can I say about that? We can see that Tony Blair and his Labour Party are experiencing some problems. Members of Parliament, who represent the people, are increasingly divided on the relevance of Tony Blair's actions as prime minister. He is looking more and more like some kind of part-time foreign affairs minister for the United States, travelling the world to try to get countries like Italy and Spain to sign on.

In fact, as I was saying, this is starting to create an uproar. We can feel it in certain nations and also in certain people. We hear the damning comments by Nelson Mandela, who is not only denouncing the imperialism underlying the U.S. position, but also making, in public, a direct connection between the importance of oil for the Americans and their intention to attack Iraq.

The fact that this man, whose wisdom is recognized internationally, would dare say such things in public is a sure sign that something is really wrong.

The solution still resides in looking to achieve peace through diplomatic means. In this regard, France's efforts must be encouraged. It does not always behave as it should, in Africa for example, but I think that what it is doing right now with Germany, Belgium and Russia is more civilized than the kind of belligerent rhetoric that we have been hearing elsewhere and that I, as a citizen of the world, find totally irrelevant in today's society.

Power does not give a country the right to do as it pleases. I will conclude by saying that we must replace the "might is right" rule by the rule of law.

• (1655)

Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today for the very first time ever in this House, particularly since the topic of this Bloc Québécois opposition day is of such vital importance. It will, moreover, affect a large number of my fellow citizens in the riding of Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay.

The importance the Iraqi question is assuming on the international level forces us all to do some very serious thinking. Decisions that are fraught with consequences need to be reached here, decisions that will have a direct impact on the lives of millions of people, including the people of Canada and Quebec.

I will therefore indicate some points that need to be raised and given consideration by the government. First, the Bloc Québécois has a duty to represent the will of the Quebec people. Through polls and directly, the people of Quebec have clearly demonstrated in recent days their opinion about a military intervention in Iraq without UN consent. It is clear, therefore, that my position is one that I have adopted without hesitation, hence my pleasure at being able to rise today in this place.

Since we are in a democratic system, the government cannot close its eyes to the opposition being raised by all the groups throughout Canada who object to war on Iraq.

I would also like to remind hon. members of the historical position of the Government of Canada. Before the present Prime Minister came along, Canada always acted via the United Nations. What is more, prime ministers always wisely decided to hold a vote before engaging in any major conflict.

We need think only of the two world wars, the Korean conflict, the Gulf War. On positions as crucial as these, it is up to the public to decide, because it is directly affected. I am calling upon the Liberal government to face up to its responsibilities and to put this decision back in the hands of parliamentarians, who are the representatives of the population.

Supply

Within a community, no citizen, powerful or rich though he may be, has the right to declare himself exempt from the rules and the law. If he does, he will be called to justice. Imagine what would happen if people decided to stop respecting the government institution that represents them. There would be confusion, if not downright anarchy. So, similarly, if countries, or one powerful country, consistently ignore the supranational institution that is the UN, world balance, which is already very fragile, is at risk.

In recent decades, we have seen how necessary the United Nations organization has been to international equilibrium. This was true in the past and is all the more so today. We must never return to the law of the jungle.

If the United States and Great Britain were to decide to take matters into their own hands and attack Iraq without UN approval, it would be a bit as if an individual decided to punish someone who had been accused without waiting for a verdict on the part of a recognized tribunal.

When such an international system is in place, it must be respected objectively. In a court of law, the Crown prosecutor does not impose and carry out the sentence. However, this is what the U.S. is getting ready to do, namely to convict without a finding of guilt. It is not only Saddam Hussein it is getting ready to eliminate, but thousands of innocent victims who happen to have been born in that country.

Maybe we should consider ousting Saddam Hussein and making him powerless to do harm? But first we have a paramount responsibility, namely protecting the women and children of that country, who are already suffering a lot due to the sanctions imposed after the last conflicts.

Once the UN report is completed and the UN has passed judgment on Saddam Hussein, we will have to take its recommendations into account, because if we do not trust this institution, whom shall we trust? Which country has the right to make its own laws or its own rules? It would not be very reasonable to allow just anybody to do it.

I have a question: Will the Canadian government blindly follow the United States in the hope that we will eventually be rewarded for our faithfulness? I will remind everybody that for years now we have virtually been stuck to them, and we know how we have been rewarded, for instance in the softwood lumber dispute. Because of this dispute many families in our communities, in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean for instance, are now destitute.

• (1700)

Today, the Liberal government has the opportunity to confirm what it has proclaimed loud and clear so often, namely its independence from the United States.

Finally, I myself was a paratrooper in the Canadian Forces for several years. Seeing some of my friends and young people from my riding go to Iraq when it has not been deemed necessary by the UN would sadden me terribly.

Today, as a parliamentarian, I want to be able to look my friends who are still in the military and their families straight in the eyes and tell them in all sincerity that the decision which has been made is justified. Going to war with the conviction it is essential and unavoidable can be motivating and gratifying. But leaving in a

climate of uncertainty and ambiguity is not only distressing, it is deadly.

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister of the Environment.

I want to say very clearly that I support the opposition motion. War should only be used as a last resort after all other attempts to find a peaceful solution have failed.

Having said that, I am not naive enough to believe that wishing it so will make it so. It is obvious and very clear that Saddam Hussein needs to be disarmed. It is obvious and very clear that Saddam Hussein has a history of ruthless violence against his own people and surrounding peoples. It is obvious and clear that Saddam Hussein has violated United Nations resolutions. Therefore, let me be very clear that we are not suggesting that Saddam Hussein is a wonderful human being and that we should think kindly of him and trust him.

I believe war is a weapon of such violence that we need to be very clear about when we are going to use war. I believe war should only be used in two instances. When there is clear and imminent danger from a particular party that we are considering and when we have to defend ourselves. Let us examine that.

Is there clear and imminent danger? The last time, during desert storm in 1991, we bombed Iraq and it was left in rubble. Twelve years of sanctions have kept Iraq from ever growing and moving forward, or helping its people. We know from UNICEF and World Health Organization statistics that 4,500 children die every month from dehydration, malnutrition and water borne diseases. The 1991 desert storm bombing destroyed all Iraq's ability to keep its water supply clean and now children are dying every day.

When we bomb Iraq who will we be killing? Do any of us believe we will kill Saddam Hussein? We did not get the al-Qaeda terrorists in Afghanistan. We did not get Osama bin Laden. He has gone somewhere. Do we think that Saddam Hussein will sit and wait for someone to bomb him? We will only be harming a lot of children. Sixty per cent of those vulnerable in Iraq right now are under seven years of age.

Why will we be bombing Iraq? Will we be bombing Iraq because we want to detonate weapons of mass destruction? Does that make any sense to anyone? Will we be bombing it because we think it has weapons of mass destruction that it is prepared to use now? We found 11 canisters of chemical weapons. They are old and rusted. Were they there during the gulf war? Are they old, unusable containers?

If we really are concerned about clear and imminent danger we should look at North Korea, which not only has amassed those weapons and are getting ready to use them, but has said very openly to the United States that it is going to get it. Not only is it going to get the United States, but it has posters speaking about crushing the United States.

Supply

Where is the clear and imminent danger? I would say that we need to look to North Korea but we are looking to Iraq. We are looking to a country where its people are continually suffering. The whole concept of clear and imminent danger is one that I do not see fulfilled right now. Therefore I do not understand why we would want to bomb Iraq.

I suggest that we continue to look at what the United Nations is doing. We have had a Security Council resolution. Everyone has spoken to resolution 1441. We all know that Hans Blix will be reporting on February 14. Let us hear what his report says. Let us hear if there is clear and imminent danger. Let us hear what the United Nations Security Council decides to do. Even then I would say that Canada should consider what it does. We need to consider how we will disarm Iraq.

I do not believe, as I said earlier, that dropping bombs on Iraq will disarm it. Some countries in the world have floated ideas around. How do we disarm Iraq? Some people have said that if ground troops were sent in we could effectively disarm Iraq but only if we hear on February 14 that there is a concern that there have been weapons sitting there.

• (1705)

The second thing we may do is consider other ways of dealing with this issue. We only have to look at the International Criminal Court which Canada had a huge role in promoting. We could bring people, who have violated United Nations resolutions and who are seen to be horrible violent dictators, before this court. Let us take Saddam Hussein to the International Criminal Court.

How can we do that when the United States, which was opposed to the International Criminal Court for so long, only agreed to it on the condition that it have one year of a moratorium where it would not be examined at the International Criminal Court? We have clear tools that have been set up to deal with people like Saddam Hussein.

What will happen if we have a war? Will it resolve the problem or will it create an even greater problem? We have heard that Saddam Hussein has links to terrorism. In a recent report by the CIA called "Patterns of Global Terrorism" it states that in 2002 Iraq was a low risk mainly because there was no association with terrorists that it could find.

We heard from Mr. Powell's presentation to the United Nations that there were al-Qaeda terrorists in northern Iraq. That area of northern Iraq is supposed to be under Kurdish domination and therefore Saddam Hussein has absolutely no authority over that area.

We have the United States itself and we have the knowledge of the geography of where those terrorists are to say that there are no terrorist links.

It is obvious to anyone that fear is a reasonable response to terror. As peoples of the world we should be doing two things: first, responding to terror; and second, creating an environment in which we do not have unilateral action from any country for a pre-emptive strike on another country.

Have we not lived through enough wars to have learned that we need to come together as nations and come up with a concerted plan of action, a clear strategy that we must undertake?

What kind of foreign policy do we need as a democratic nation of the world to develop to deal with the Saddam Husseins of the world? I must say that if we are talking about the violation of human rights, why are we only looking at Saddam Hussein? Why are we not looking at Indonesia? Why are we not looking at Israel? There are violations there.

It is clear from articles 41 and 42 of the United Nations charter that if there is a violation of United Nations conventions that no one country should take a stand to deal with that. It is up to the United Nations Security Council to deal with that.

We have a process. Let us work within the process. This process is not about suggesting that people hate the United States, or this is an anti-U.S. sentiment. It is not. It is about recognizing that we went to war many times and all those wars were supposed to end wars but that they did not. Because of that we set up a multilateral organization called the United Nations in which nations of the world could come together, do the checks and balances and form a concerted plan of action in which to deal with terror, with human rights violations and with pre-emptive strikes.

This is what we want to do because we cannot have two sets of rules. We cannot have a double standard. We cannot have only one country being allowed to make pre-emptive strikes. What is to stop China, India or North Korea from doing the same, or any country that possesses nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction?

Disarmament is obviously the only way for us to foster an environment of peace in this world. Let us deal with disarmament in a strategic manner. All countries should disarm, not some disarm and others not. Let us talk about how we move toward a plan for disarmament. Let us take a rational approach if we are not in clear and imminent danger and if we are very clear that we do not need to defend ourselves.

This is why we need to take the time. We need to work together. We need to come to a plan of action that will achieve the ends that we desire. Those ends are to disarm Iraq and get Saddam Hussein to justice for his crimes against humanity. We have the tools set up through the United Nations to do that.

We need to create an environment in which we value women and children in this world. By bombing we will not be killing the person we want to kill. We will only be creating new grounds for people to fear us and to begin to develop terrorism because they are so afraid of us and afraid of what we in the democratic world will use our might to achieve.

• (1710)

I would like us to discuss this. I support the motion. I say let Canada lead as it has always done in creating a world where peace and human security are achieved through viable and clear processes and means under the United Nations.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there is lot of passion on the issue today, but I do not know if I have heard a lot of logic. The motion is about whether we need a 17th, I think it is, UN resolution on Iraq before "serious consequences" means serious consequences.

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I do share the member's passion and hope that there is not a war. I do hope that the pressure that frankly the Americans and their allies are bringing on Saddam Hussein right now might actually bring about a peaceful resolution. The UN peacekeepers would not even be back in there today if it were not for the Americans. We would not even be this close to a possible solution, because Saddam has of course violated all of the 16 or 17 resolutions to date and has no intention of keeping them.

I have two quick questions. The first is that if it is only clear and imminent danger we should act upon, then why were we in Kosovo? Second, why were we in Kosovo without the United Nations? Russia vetoed that. The Security Council vetoed that. What did we do? We who cared about the situation in Kosovo went around the United Nations and worked with our NATO allies, saying that we had to go in there and clean out that hornet's nest. Why is Milosevic before the courts now? We know that he did not walk up and volunteer his time. He was brought to justice.

My question is, how do we think we will get Saddam Hussein to justice? The criminal court might be a fine place to get him, but we just cannot send out an invitation like a birthday card and hope he will show up. I think he will have to be brought to justice.

We can all plead for disarmament around the world. I heard the passionate plea from the member and I think she is sincere, but it does not work unilaterally. We will not get guys like Saddam Hussein to play that game. They do not just say that the jig is up and they think they will walk off to Geneva to see how they do in court. These people will hold on to power, viciously, tyrannically and, as the former leader of the NDP said, demonically.

I do not know if I would go that far, but certainly with everything at his disposal, including a million man army, he will keep his people under his thumb and he will not come to court. He will not disarm. He will not obey UN resolutions. The only reason he is co-operating as much as he is right now is that the Americans and the British are breathing down his throat. He is now tossing documents onto the table hoping that will satisfy them. I do not know how the member thinks that bringing him to court is a possibility. How will that work?

• (1715)

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asks some very important questions. If we are going to demonize Saddam Hussein, and maybe he deserves to be demonized or whatever, this is not new. He is not suddenly killing his own people and violating United Nations human rights resolutions. In 1983, we saw the same Mr. Rumsfeld with an arm around Saddam Hussein shaking his hand just after he had gassed 6,800 Kurds. Let us ask ourselves, what is this sudden hurry to deal with Saddam Hussein when he was a friend once, when he was doing the same things he is doing now? In fact, his fangs have been pulled over the last 12 years because we have not seen a lot from him.

My question is, if we are going to be concerned about terrorism and human rights violations, let us be really clear and not have double standards. We have Indonesia, Turkey, Israel and North Korea. There are all kinds of people who have been violating human rights in their countries and who are threatening the United States right now, so why are we not doing anything about them?

The question that the hon. member asked was about Kosovo. There was a multilateral decision at the time. That was through NATO, so Canada went there. There was a very clear sense from NATO, which was on the ground in Europe where the problems were occurring in Kosovo, that it was what we should do, so we did it. I am not suggesting to the hon. member that Milosevic walked up and said, "Here I am. Please take me to the International Criminal Court".

Obviously there are ways in which we can set up some clear strategic plans through democratic countries, through the United Nations, and we can bring people to justice under the criminal court. Let us find them. We still have not found Osama bin Laden. We bombed Afghanistan, which was rubble anyway, and there we go, we have left it alone. The Taliban is coming back.

What will be the result of bombing Iraq? I wish to hear that from some of the members across the way. What will we do? Are we going to just walk away and leave it like we did Afghanistan, for young people to continue to die with this order?

An hon. member: No, Iraq has oil. We won't—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment.

Mr. Alan Tonks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, much has been said by members on both sides of the House regarding the present situation in Iraq. All have agreed that all actions must be taken, particularly in the area of diplomacy, to avoid war and that should an attack on Iraq be inevitable such action be sanctioned by the United Nations.

It also should be noted that throughout the last several months the position of the Canadian government, as articulated by the Prime Minister, has been consistent with both of these goals: accelerated diplomacy and support for the United Nations.

One of the most noteworthy accomplishments of this approach, which historically been the linchpin of Canadian foreign policy, has been to impress upon the United States that within an increasingly complicated global environment, multilateral action is preferable to unilateral initiative in pursuit of peace and, most important, the real war, the war on terrorism, which in effect is a war on humanity.

It should be stated categorically that Canadian leadership has been instrumental in successfully having the United States bring the issue of Iraq and, by corollary, terrorism to the United Nations where, if humanity and civil society as we know it is going to escape the Armageddon that will result from international nuclear and biological barbarism, solutions must be found.

But while we are all in agreement with this approach, what are we to do should the United Nations, because of Security Council veto, fail to take action with respect to Iraq's violation of resolution 1441? If not in the area of nuclear weapons of mass destruction, irrefutably Iraq is engaged in the proliferation of biological weapons of horrific magnitude.

History provides us a lesson with respect to the demise of the League of Nations and subsequent policies of appeasement: that there comes a time in the affairs of state where authoritarian and inhuman regimes not bound by rule of law and respect for human rights must be confronted by those that are.

Canadians of every political and religious persuasion and every national state of origin look to their government for profoundly intelligent and decisive leadership, leadership that will shape events and not simply react to them.

What, then, is the situation in which we find ourselves in terms of a reactive posture? On the other hand, given Canadian initiatives thus far, what is the direction that will continue the cohesive support that the government enjoys from Canadians on its position taken thus far?

I think it is clear that legally and technically Iraq is in violation of resolution 1441, and if not, at the very least it is not complying with the spirit of that resolution. It is clear that in the over 10 years since the Gulf war, Iraq has not disarmed and its very belligerence in the face of international solidarity demonstrates that it has the capacity for armed resistance on an alarming scale.

Can it be any wonder, therefore, that the world must take appropriate pre-emptive action against the Iraqi leadership, which in recent history has shown monstrous disregard for even its own citizens? There can be no question, therefore, that if it has not done so already, it will most certainly harbour terrorists who with time will prove a threat of a most serious proportion to world peace.

What, then, is the correct position for Canada to take in response to this threat? I would respectfully contend that in terms of world peace we have a very small window of opportunity to avert the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and find them in the hands of terrorists. In that respect, the United States is correct, and we are fortunate that the United States has the military capability to counterbalance the behaviour of criminally non-conforming regimes such as Iraq and North Korea. But the United States is wrong to believe it can be the world's policeman without incurring just the opposite, the enmity of the world, and this in spite of the fact that in almost every international calamity it is the United States that responds with humanitarian aid.

• (1720)

It is because of the role and credibility of the United States, and that they are so fundamental to world peace, that Canada must continue to play its leadership role in bridging its efforts with the United Nations. What this means is that a new world order is being created. It is really only the United States that shares with us a democratic moral imperative that can take us away from the kind of nuclear abyss that will mean the end of civil society as we know it, as we know it and as our children will know it.

Who will play this role if we do not? Not the Europeans alone, and not the Russian or Chinese regimes at this time, as they are only now just beginning to develop democratic institutions themselves. No, the world has come to expect that Canada will play this role of helpful fixer. This role has served the world well through peacekeeping initiatives in the past century, and it was Canadian

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diplomatic and political leadership that contributed to the recognition of the People's Republic of China and the end of the cold war.

In no time since the second world war has the world been more in danger and at no time has it been more incumbent that the House shed partisanship and support the government in doing what Canada has done best: forging alliances for peace, with the United States as its trusting and trusted neighbour.

• (1725)

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. When I was answering the question by the hon. member across the way earlier on, I was speaking of human rights violations and of contraventions of the United Nations charter. I want to clarify that my reference to Turkey, Indonesia and Israel was only with regard to United Nations resolutions contraventions and not to human rights violations.

The Deputy Speaker: The member would understand that this was not a point of order but, in her own words, a matter of clarification.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I did appreciate the comments from the member. He articulated something I had been hoping to hear more of from the other side, which basically is that our best political friends and international allies are the Americans. Not only is the United States our best trading partner but, as the member has said, it is probably the country that we have most in common with as far as democratic ideals and a working relationship on them are concerned. I am very grateful to hear his comments along those lines. I think we can have an honest difference of opinion as to what we should do about that, but, boy, that is a healthy breath of fresh air to hear that in this place from the Liberals. I am so pleased about that.

I do want him, though, to address specifically the issue brought forward by the Bloc today as to whether he believes we should not support the multilateral approach of the Americans in dealing with the contravention of resolution 1441. In other words, the Bloc says that we cannot do any more, that we cannot support any military action unless there is a 17th specific resolution of the United Nations calling for military intervention.

Does he support the motion of the Bloc or does he think that resolution 1441 currently before the United Nations, specifically talking about the breaking of the ceasefire agreement and signed way back in 1991, is enough if, heaven forbid, we have to take military action against Saddam? Is it enough of a legal requirement for the United States to move with its partners and do a military job there?

Mr. Alan Tonks: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Colin Powell approached the United Nations in a two phase manner. What he has done, to my mind, is illustrate that at this point he does not believe that there is the necessity for a second resolution. He feels that he has argued that persuasively. At this point I am not going to comment further on that, but what he has done is set the stage to argue that again before the Security Council in a few days.

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It is my feeling that we should not talk about failure at this point until we have played our role with respect to achieving the success of a multilateral and coordinated response to what is happening in Iraq. I think that Colin Powell and the United States have yet to have their second opportunity to do that. Canada should be very supportive of giving that kind of airing through the Security Council, which the United States has requested. As I indicated in my speech, that is the position we have taken. We have bumped and nudged the United States to go to the United Nations, so we should not at this point prejudge what the outcome of that will be. I do not support the Bloc's resolution.

• (1730)

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I too want to express my appreciation to the hon. member. His words were very wise and well put. It is certainly a nice change from what I have been hearing.

We do not have to be reminded of the horrors of war. I think every one of us here is familiar with that from the past. This is not what we should be debating. We should be debating how we resolve the difficult situation that lies before us.

I too agree that there is no reason why we should throw our political stripes on the table and say that is what we will follow. A lot of times with these issues one has to not only follow the advice that one gets from the facts but sometimes simply follow one's heart and make a judgment on past history.

I do not believe the gulf war ended in 1990. I believe there was a ceasefire. The member seemed to be speaking about after the war, but the war really never ended. Resolutions were put forward that Iraq, particularly Saddam, was expected to meet. He has failed on every occasion to meet them.

After resolution 1441, does the member truly believe there should be another resolution?

Mr. Alan Tonks: Mr. Speaker, I was persuaded by the member's earlier speech with respect to the background on what happened as a result of post-gulf war events. The member is right that there was simply a truce of sorts and that it was incumbent on Iraq to disarm. I think that was very clear.

However I too do not want to be technical or legal about that because I do not know enough about it. The spirit of what happened was not complied with by the leadership in Iraq. That is very clear. Because of that, we are in the present situation, and world peace is being placed at risk.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonnette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the House permits it, I will be sharing my time with the member for Berthier—Montcalm, who reminds us how much the Bloc Québécois remains a force in Quebec.

The motion before us today is extremely serious and extremely solemn. When it comes to war and peace, it is impossible to take things lightly, and we certainly cannot talk like some of our colleagues have, as though this were some western, where there are good guys and bad guys.

The situation requires that we examine it from all angles and I think that that is what my colleague, the member for Saint-Jean, had in mind when he moved the motion.

The motion states that if there must be military intervention—please note the importance of the if—it could only be done after the United Nations Security Council authorized a multilateral intervention in Iraq.

So, we in the Bloc Québécois find it hard to imagine that the United States should act alone. We have the utmost respect for the U.S., whose President Kennedy once said, in reference to Canada, that geography had made us neighbours, but history had made us friends. Indeed, we are friends with the United States and indeed, we do have intense trade relations with the U.S. However, as the member for Mercier said, "Might does not make right". That is why any intervention undertaken must be multilateral.

Does this mean that we believe that there cannot be a military intervention under any circumstances? Not necessarily. The motion does not say that. The motion, with all of the sense of nuance that these circumstances require, asks that our actions be part of a multilateral United Nations effort, and asks that we weigh the situation.

Why is the Bloc Québécois right to take this approach? First, we need to realize that if we do support a military offensive in the region where Iraq is located, there will be consequences. There will be consequences for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as for the other surrounding Muslim countries. These consequences could involve more than toppling governments or destabilizing a situation that is far from stable; they could obviously lead to civilian casualties.

That is why this is necessary each time we, as parliamentarians, must consider sending equipment or troops.

I was rather disappointed this morning by the casual attitude of the government House leader. I have great respect for him. He is a man who believes in this institution; he started his career here washing the dishes of parliamentarians; he personifies perseverance and what one can achieve when one decides to get involved and dedicate one's life to a cause.

However, he suggested that we did not take seriously the possibility of a vote in this House. Granted, the motion does not call for one explicitly, but in all our remarks—whether the Bloc leader, the hon. member for Mercier or the hon. member for Saint-Jean—we have remained convinced that it is impossible to act sensibly without associating the parliamentarians to a decision of this magnitude.

This is not just a constitutional issue. I studied constitutional law. I am well aware that it is the prerogative of the executive branch of government—the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord is smiling at me because he is encouraging me to continue studying. I took classes in constitutional law and I am aware of the prerogative. There is also my colleague, the hon. member for Mercier, to whom we wish every success on this day after the congress, but I will not get into that.

There is something odd in what parliamentarians are saying, and there is a historical perspective we must take into account.

• (1735)

When the hon. member for Calgary Centre, a former prime minister, was Secretary of State for External Affairs in 1990, at the time of the first Gulf War, he moved a motion that 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.

What this resolution shows is that this is not the first time that Iraq has not complied with Security Council resolutions.

But, in 1990, Herb Gray—if I am not mistaken, he was the Liberal critic for external affairs—had made a request to the House. This is where the Liberals lack consistency, rigour and historic continuity. That is where it gets disappointing.

Herb Gray, one of the greatest parliamentarians in the history of this House, had requested, and I quote:

—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.

That is what the Bloc Quebecois has been saying since the beginning of this conflict. We are not naive. We are pacifists, which is a deep-rooted tradition in Quebec. However, we are not naive. We understand that there are times when the use of force is justified.

It is unbelievable that this morning, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons went to great lengths to make fun of what was said by the leader of the Bloc, the member for Mercier and the member for Saint-Jean. That is how politicians are discredited.

Why is it that when the Liberals were in the opposition they called for a vote on military intervention. We know why; it is because military intervention is not like fiscal policy, it is not like heritage policy, it is not like health policy. It can cost the lives of men and women.

That is why we must vote consciously. That is why we must weigh our actions. That is why we can never have too much information. That is why our parties have critics who follow this day to day, hour to hour.

That is how they have been behaving since this morning—with the exception of a few members. The member for Vancouver Centre made an extremely responsible speech by saying that yes, we are not naive and that we should debate the issue. I will come back to Mr. Blix's report.

We cannot deny that the outcome of our work as parliamentarians, the meaning of the motion today and the respect of our institution implies the duty to associate parliamentarians with a decision like this one.

Once again, the Bloc Quebecois has never said that we would refuse any type of intervention. This is possible, and we are reviewing the evidence.

I was reading that there are some questions. Yes, Saddam Hussein has been a bad leader. His behaviour has been reprehensible, that is

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clear. We should remember the mix of alliances that made the United States stand firmly by this man at times. However, that is not what is at issue. There are issues that must be resolved and 11 members out of 15 say that the inspections process must be given a chance. It has to go further, things must be done properly.

The connection that we are being asked to make sometimes between existing terrorist networks in Iraqi territory and the legitimacy of a U.S. response has not yet been demonstrated. Will that connection be demonstrated eventually? We will see.

The day when it is proven that there is indeed the slightest connection between al-Qaeda and the Iraqi regime, the Bloc Quebecois will obviously be reviewing its position. It will be a most determining factor in our decision. However, it is not the case at this time.

Eleven countries out of 15—and not any just any country, not countries that have been irresponsible in the past—say that the inspection process must be given another chance. The number of inspectors will soon be increased from 280 to 350.

In conclusion, this is a responsible motion which I think deserves the support of all parliamentarians.

• (1740)

[*English*]

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. member refer several times to a putative need for more time to allow the inspections process to work.

I think his comment, although undoubtedly well intentioned, is based on a profound misunderstanding of the obligations that Iraq finds itself under UNSCR 1441 and the 15 resolutions that preceded it.

The model which these resolutions create, the obligation, is not on the weapons inspectors to play hide and seek in Iraq. It is not to multiply the number of inspectors to search and find hidden weapons, rather there is only one obligation under 1441 and the other resolutions and that obligation is on Iraq to immediately disarm. The inspectors are not searchers or investigators; they are verifiers. They are there to watch the Iraqi regime and to verify that it has destroyed its weapons of mass destruction.

Resolution 1441 states that the inspectors were not able to do their job after several years in the 1990s. It is asserted in resolution 1441 that Iraq was in material breach of its obligations over the course of 12 years leading up to this moment. The member said we need more time.

How much more time is he prepared to give and what kind of risks is he prepared to have the United States and other democracies tolerate as long as we know that this dangerous dictator is in the possession of weapons that can destroy tens of thousands of lives at his whim? How long is he prepared, and does he not understand that the obligation is on Iraq and not on the inspectors to verify destruction of these materials?

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● (1745)

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for my colleague, who seems to be pushing for the hard line approach since the beginning of this debate, correct me if I am wrong, but I think it was the U.S. that asked for the inspections to stop back in 1998.

What I find incredible on the part of our colleagues from the Alliance is that not one of them has expressed concerns about the civilian population. They want us to assess the risk, but we do not have all the information we need to make a final assessment.

It is as if our hon. colleague did not take into account the risks involved in launching an attack on Iraq. How many young children would be killed? I read somewhere that it would be 500,000. Some humanitarian organizations have talked about a genocide.

When we have to take a look at the whole picture, pushing the hard line approach is not enough. We do not need to determine if we are doves, or hawks or some other kind of bird. What is important is to take into consideration all the different nuances. And in that, our Alliance colleagues have failed miserably so far today, I am sorry to say.

[English]

Mr. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I regret that in his response the member made it clear that in fact he is not familiar with UNSCR 1441 because he once again reasserted the canard that UNSCOM and IAEA inspectors left Iraq because of pressure from the United States. All 16 members of the UN Security Council last November, in unanimously passing resolution 1441, asserted at paragraphs 7 and 8 in the preamble that it was Iraq that failed to cooperate fully and unconditionally with UNSCOM and IAEA weapons inspectors as required by resolution 687 and ultimately ceased all cooperation with these agencies in 1998. Paragraph 8 says the same thing at length.

How are we to take the member seriously when he asserts that it was the United States that terminated the inspections when in fact the unanimous resolution of the Security Council makes it clear that it was Iraq's non-compliance which led to the termination of those failed inspections?

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, no one in the Bloc Québécois, and that includes me, is claiming that Iraq did not commit any violations.

The issue is that, in the future, based on a full assessment of the situation, it is our hope that, if there is a military intervention, it will be conducted under the aegis of the UN. What distinguishes us from the official opposition is that we do not believe that the United States should engage in a military offensive without the approval of a second Security Council resolution.

Should there be a second resolution, we would like a vote to be held in the House, and this is what we are debating today.

Mr. Roger Gaudet (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House to address such an issue. This issue is important not just for Quebec and Canada, but for the world and for all future international relations.

As one can see, each word of the Bloc Québécois motion tabled by the hon. member for Saint-Jean is there for a reason and should get the support of the House of Commons. The motion reads as follows:

That this House consider the sending of troops to Iraq by the government only after the United Nations Security Council has passed a resolution explicitly authorizing a military intervention in Iraq.

With this motion, we want to ensure that the House of Commons can vote on the sending of troops to Iraq, and we are also defending the role of Parliament in the making of such decisions.

Like the majority of Quebeckers and Canadians, I want to say loud and clear that I disapprove any participation in a military intervention that is not be supported by the UN Security Council.

We must not lose track of past mistakes and of the reason for establishing the United Nations Organization in 1945. Since the last world war, all nations of the world have realized that war has made too many victims and caused too much hardship to allow us to get into any armed conflict without getting the Security Council, the UN's primary peacekeeping body, onside.

The United Nations Organization was based on the August 1941 Atlantic Charter, whereby U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill wanted future generations to inherit an organization that would protect them against human stupidity and do everything it could to ensure that innocent victims were no longer counted in the millions as they were in the last world war. The whole world said, "Let there never be such horrors again".

The successors of Roosevelt and Churchill should not be the ones, more than 60 years later, to ignore the historical weight of and the raison d'être of the Security Council.

I want all my constituents in the riding of Berthier—Montcalm to know that I am not one to ignore the past. That is why I wholeheartedly support this motion. I totally disagree with any participation in a military intervention without the support of the United Nations Security Council.

The motion put forward by the Bloc Québécois is clear and unequivocal. We cannot consider sending troops into Iraq without the UN explicitly authorizing it. It is up to the UN to decide whether military force should be used or not, and it must do so in a second resolution.

Like many of my fellow citizens, try as I may to keep abreast of developments, listen to the news, read whatever reports are available, understand the evasive Canadian position, and assess the inspectors' evidence, for the time being, no one knows for sure whether or not Iraq has weapons of mass destruction.

Convinced that Iraq does have such weapons, some people in the U.S. believe that the United States, in conjunction with the whole world, must take military action to ensure security worldwide. So far, UN inspectors have not found anything that would indicate that the Iraqi nuclear program is up and running again.

Knowing the man, it is obvious that Saddam Hussein would certainly like to obtain a nuclear weapon and that he probably already has chemical and biological weapons at his disposal. But one cannot take justice into one's own hands based on presumptions.

A pre-emptive attack based on nothing definite would be illegal from an international point of view. No country is entitled to attack another one based on mere suspicion. In this case, as in many others, hard evidence required and Americans do not have them.

Not only is it a deadly blow to the UN Security Council's credibility, but it also creates a dangerous precedent.

Once the United States has attacked Iraq on mere presumptions, what will prevent other countries from taking measures to put an end to threats that they consider even more pressing? Where will it all end?

The United States cannot be considered any differently from the others because of its power and of the role it plays on the international level. On the contrary, because it is one of the best armed and the most economically vibrant nations, it has to set an example. It is not pre-emptive military action that is needed against Iraq, but pre-emptive diplomacy.

The international inspectors are expected to present their report to the United Nations Security Council on February 14. Will the evidence contained in this report be sufficient to help the Security Council reach a decision? Will the Security Council adopt a second resolution that would authorize the use of force against Iraq?

Whatever the outcome, before Canada decides on any action, military or otherwise, a vote should be held in this House.

A simple debate without a formal vote is not enough, just as a vote on approving a decision already taken by the Prime Minister and cabinet would sour Canadian democracy and would not be acceptable.

• (1750)

Just like the U.S. congressmen who passed a motion giving the President the right to send troops to Iraq, and just like England, where Tony Blair maintains that he will ask for the United Kingdom's House of Commons' consent before taking military action against Iraq, it is imperative that we vote in the House on a possible military intervention before the Prime Minister decides to involve Canada in a war against Iraq.

This is absolutely crucial. The repercussions of a possible intervention are too serious not to give the elected representatives of Canada and Quebec the chance to vote as their conscience dictates on such a crucial issue.

I feel I was elected in December precisely to fight for democracy, to give my opinion on some fundamental issues like this one and to express the views of the people of Berthier—Montcalm.

Supply

Military intervention means that the life of Quebeckers will be at stake. Is there any decision more important than one which could cost the lives of our fellow citizens?

The decisions taken in the next few days could have a major impact on the future of Canada, of Quebec and of the whole world.

Our behaviour and our choices, as elected representatives of course, but as responsible human beings as well, will define the international order, set new legal standards, change the international environment, but first and foremost, in the immediate future, give meaning to the role and *raison d'être* of the UN Security Council.

Nationally, taking a vote in the House of Commons will ensure democracy is front and centre however we respond to the current situation, thereby giving credibility to Canada's voice and to the Prime Minister's actions on the international scene.

I cannot understand why we have to try to convince the Liberal government of the importance of taking a vote before making a decision on a fundamental question like entering into war with another country. When the Liberals opposite were in opposition, at the time of the Gulf War, they asked the Conservative government for a formal vote.

I will quote what Liberal member Herb Gray said about a motion put forward by the then Secretary of State for External Affairs:

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.

Similarly, we insist that the elected representatives of Canada and Quebec get to vote on this issue. I encourage all members of this House to start by taking my lead and supporting the motion before us.

Then, depending on the UN Security Council's final decision and the second resolution it may adopt, we will have the opportunity to discuss the issue further and finalize our position.

The importance of this issue and its international implications are such that it is imperative that we consider it seriously and take whatever time we need to do so.

• (1755)

Mr. André Harvey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a brief comment. I think that everyone agrees on the importance of the role played by the United Nations.

In all the debates since this morning, there was a tendency to adopt an anti-American attitude, which is a very shallow thing to do. Events occurred, and I am thinking of the former Yugoslavia where intervention was not quick enough.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague, whom I wish to congratulate, a quick question. This is one of the first times he has risen in the House to speak.

Does he think that deploying American and British troops will have an impact on the effectiveness of the inspectors? I would like to try to strike a balance.

Supply

The role Americans have played for many decades in the preservation of freedom is considered quite constructive. In this respect, would the inspectors better assume their role if the Americans had not deployed troops to the Persian Gulf? The figure is 150,000 troops.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Mr. Speaker, let us say that there would not have been war if there had not been inspectors. The UN inspectors and the Americans were there, increasing the pressure.

[*English*]

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the member asserted in his remarks that nobody is really certain whether Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction. I am not aware of a single sovereign nation in the world, let alone among the 16 in the UN Security Council, with the exception of the Saddam Baath regime in Iraq, which contests the assertion that Iraq is in possession of weapons of mass destruction, contrary to its obligations under the UN Security Council resolution.

Could the member please specify for us a single country which he may be familiar with which questions whether or not Iraq actually is in possession of illegal weapons of mass destruction? Could he bring some evidence that I am not aware of that Iraq is in fact not in possession of such weapons?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Mr. Speaker, that is not the question. The question is whether there is any clear evidence. So far, even Colin Powell has not convinced the members of the UN Security Council.

My colleague has spoken about this, but I have doubts.

[*English*]

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the member is completely missing the point. I wish people would read the resolution and understand how has evolved to this point. The whole point is the United Nations says that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. The United Nations, not the United States, says that it must bring those weapons out into the open, destroy them and show them to be destroyed. That is the issue. The weapons inspectors are to inspect the destruction of the weapons. They are not to prove that these weapons exist. They are not trying to find a needle in a haystack.

I urge the member not to debate whether they should go to war. That is a good enough question, but do not garble the facts. The facts speak for themselves. The United Nations is clear and unequivocal. The weapons exist. Get them out there, show them to be destroyed and this deal probably will be settled quickly.

However, it is not up to us in the opposition, or the United Nations inspectors or the United States to prove the weapons exist. The United Nations says that they exist and until they are destroyed, there is a problem with Iraq.

•(1800)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Mr. Speaker, the United Nations are not the ones who are going to decide whether they are in the right or not, it is the Security Council. Several countries have a veto power. I think that France and Germany, both closer to that region than we are, have some serious doubts.

An hon. member: There is resolution 1441.

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Enough of resolution 1441. I know it off by heart, I have been hearing about it all day long.

That is not the question. The question is that we have to use our heads and say that, if the Security Council wants us to go, then go we will. In the meantime, we have no right to do so.

[*English*]

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last time the House debated this a few days ago I had the privilege to speak for a few moments before the debate ended at about 1:30 in the morning. Consequently my speech was truncated. Therefore I am delighted to have a chance to, if not complete the speech that never was fully given, at least make a few remarks on behalf of my constituents from Scarborough—Rouge River.

The issue today is Canada's position on sending troops to Iraq. Certainly that decision is yet to be made. It is a very important debate and members on both sides of the House are letting the House and the government know where they stand.

Nobody wants a war, and I am not even sure that war is the right term to be used here. I prefer to think of the term "military engagement" or "enforcement action" in the event that something does mature.

I was disappointed last night to hear a news item, which said something like Iraq had indicated that it was prepared to agree to provide additional and more information about its weapons. That was disappointing because to me it meant that Iraq had not been forthcoming previously. It meant that our friends in the United States were correct when they said that Iraq was lying, that it was not being forthright and that it was hiding information.

Perhaps, a little naively, I had hoped that there would not be weapons and that Iraq had done its best although under some disability to deal with the issue. I do not know and Canadians do not know if that news report is accurate. However if it is accurate, that means the powers that be here and in other world capitals cannot fail to take note of the fact the Iraqis have not belied up to the trough and may not be doing so now. This is a serious issue.

I can see the news reports, I can see the military build-up and I can see Canada struggling with this issue. Nobody wants to go to war. Nobody wants to put our armed forces in harm's way, at least in a way that can be messy, death-like and costly not just for now but for many years.

Therefore I start off with that sense of not really wanting to go there. If forced to go there and if Canadians feel that they have to do it for our security or world security, then we have done it in the past and I am pretty sure that Canadians will want to do it again.

I want to make a short remark about the business of bringing forth intelligence information. Maybe we really have not seen everything there is to see. Strategically, if we have intelligence information, we do not want to make it publicly available. If we do, two things happen. We may give up our source and we may give up our edge. No country that invests millions and billions of dollars, such as the U.S. does, wants to give up its edge or its source. Sources may be very sensitive. Therefore we may not see everything.

I am pretty sure from time to time our leaders in Canada see things on the security side that Canadians do not need to see and which we in the House do not see. They make decisions for our own security based on that information.

What should we do if things mature the way they seem to be moving now? I hope they do not go the distance. However I want to point out that the Americans appear to have been our allies. We appear to have been their allies. It is about 189 years since the war of 1812. That is a lot of allied companionship over the years. There have been a lot of world issues and Canadians have a strong bond with our American cousins and vice versa in many of these conflicts.

It is true that we did not march off with the Americans in the Mexican war, the Spanish civil war or the Spanish-American war. However we have had common cause with our American cousins for many years and that is not likely to change in the next few weeks.

• (1805)

Canadians have also signalled to me that if anything matures, it must be on a multilateral UN based approach. I realize we do not necessarily have the final resolution of the UN Security Council. I realize some countries agree and others do not agree. However Canada does not sit on the Security Council. Therefore this issue will evolve pretty much with exchanges between diplomats and the odd phone call between world leaders. Some phone calls have already occurred and they will continue over the next few days. In fairness that is how some of these things happen internationally now and there really is no another way to do it. They will not take 30 to 60 days to bring a big conference together to deal with this. The decisions will be made as time allows by heads of government. I know our government is a part of that.

If there is to be a military engagement of some tactical or strategic definition, it is pretty clear now, for better or for worse, that Canadians will not be in a position to be on the frontlines. If something matures now, we are simply not there. We have naval ships in the area but as everyone has seen it takes weeks and perhaps months to build up, in a modern military sense, forces necessary to engage properly, tactically and efficiently in an engagement of that type. We are not there other than our naval presence.

If Canada is asked to be a part of a coalition, hopefully with a UN sanction, we will be in a position to contribute ground forces, special operations forces, naval, which is already there, and some air. We have those abilities and are capable of providing them, provided the government has the support of the House. If it has to act, I am confident the government will have the support of the House and Canadians. The House does its very best to speak for Canadians. I hope it does not come to that, but it appears we are moving very quickly down that lane.

As I said, the news item last night appears to confirm that Iraq has been holding out and may still be holding out. I regret that. I hope some Iraqis regret that. I know the countries with whom we will be united, if there is to be any kind of a coalition from the UN discussions, feel the same way.

Canada has an armed forces of which Canadians are very proud. It does not take much to make us proud of them. They have contributed over the country's whole history. We have our naval

Supply

forces, some of which are present in the gulf now and our special operations forces, referred to as the JTF2, which were in Afghanistan. The JTF2 are capable of getting there fairly quickly if needed.

We also have our air contingent. Most countries cannot compete with the huge American air forces that could be put into play. Ours is a small but efficient air component that could be useful in some ways.

There are also our ground forces, which most of us in this place will acknowledge to be just about as good as can be in the world at peacekeeping. Some are pretty darn good at peace making. In the event there is an engagement, I cannot imagine that our government would not be in discussions with other governments about our ability to contribute to a force that would involve itself in a peacekeeping resolution, if not in Iraq, in another theatre. Apparently there is still peacekeeping to be done in Afghanistan and other areas of the world. As everyone knows, we already have a large contingent in Bosnia.

• (1810)

I will close by saying that this particular member, as he hears from his constituents, does not want to engage in any type of a military action. This must be a last resort. In the event we are called upon, we will have to stand up like big boys and girls and meet the challenge that is there internationally. In a way it is being constructed for us by other countries and other events, but in the end we have a tradition and a history of which we are proud. I cannot see Canadians picking a course that would prevent us from playing a responsible role in the relatively volatile world that confronts us now and in the weeks ahead.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the member watched the news. It was disappointing but it was nothing new that Iraq has not been complying. This is something that we know has been going on for 12 years and it will probably continue.

I do not think there is anyone in the House that has any more reason to want peace and no war than myself. I am really convinced that the allied troops, Great Britain, the United States, Australia, Spain, Italy and others who have joined this coalition who are assembling troops in that area as we speak and will continue to do so, will act as a real deterrent to keep that peace. When there is a resolution that says there will be serious consequences if it is not adhered to, one has to be prepared for the serious consequences. I think that is what they are doing. They are showing that strength and unity.

Does the member not believe, as I do, the more people come together with the unified feeling that they do mean business and that this resolution must be complied with and it does mean serious consequences, that for us to stay back would be ammunition for Saddam Hussein to continue this game?

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, I resist the temptation to get into the debate of how one can make peace by making war, but in the end if enforcement is necessary, it will have to be addressed.

Supply

While the Wyatt Earp approach is not the best one, occasionally someone has to stand up and deal with an issue. I think Canadians appreciate that from time to time. Right now I think Canadians want to observe and make an informed judgment in the multilateral arena of the United Nations and in consultation with all of our allies. We will make the best decision when that day comes, if it comes.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6.15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the business of

supply are deemed put, a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to Tuesday, February 11, 2003 at 3 p.m.

[*English*]

It being 6.15 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:15 p.m.)

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