

Excerpt from Debates of the Senate of Canada

Tuesday, September 18, 2001

Motion presented by the Government Leader in the Senate on Tuesday, September 18, 2001:

That the Senate express its sorrow and horror at the senseless and vicious attack on the United States of America on September 11, 2001;

That it express its heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and to the American people; and

That it reaffirm its commitment to the humane values of free and democratic society and its determination to bring to justice the perpetrators of this attack on these values and to defend civilization from any future terrorist attacks.

Address in Response to the Motion by Senator Douglas Roche, O.C.

Hon. Douglas Roche:

Honourable senators, my first words are an expression of deepest sympathy to the victims and their families who have suffered the evil of the terrorism that struck New York and Washington last week. Second, I say that I will stand with Prime Minister Jean Chrétien who, yesterday, set a course for Canada to give a reasoned response built on our nation's values of freedom, justice and tolerance.

I urge the government to continue to respond in a way that upholds the principles of international law. I encourage the government to shun the language of war which suggests that only militarism can combat terrorism.

Canada is not in a state of war. It is not war that we should seek but justice. It is not the rule of war that should predominate but the rule of law.

The people of the United States have been gravely wounded. There is a loud cry for vengeance. However, revenge as an end in itself will not restore the world to order. Merely defeating the enemy of terrorism will not cure the problems that feed the hate that terrorism spews out. Military action by itself may give us the feeling that we are doing something, but we will be fooling ourselves that we are actually accomplishing a safer world. A cycle of violence will only create more hate, more terrorism, and more danger for all humanity.

Of course, the terrorists who committed these terrible acts must be hunted down and brought to justice, just as the police capture a criminal in our own neighbourhood. It may take military action to do this, but the action must be proportionate so that the culprits are punished without inflicting more death on innocent civilians.

Canada should be guided in its actions by Resolution No. 1368 adopted by the United Nations Security Council on September 12, 2001. Calling on all states to work together to implement international anti-terrorist conventions, the Security Council expressed its readiness "to take all necessary steps to respond" to the latest terrorist attacks, and to act in accordance with their responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations.

Article 51 of the UN Charter, the self-defence article, permits a state acting alone or collectively to defend itself against an armed attack, but such an action must not diminish the authority and responsibility of the Security Council to maintain or restore international peace and security. The international coalition now taking shape cannot and must not supplant the authority of the Security Council.

Not only must the defence be within the confines of international law, it must be part of effective international cooperation to combat terrorism based on the principles of the Charter, including respect for international humanitarian law and human rights.

At the very least, any military response must be limited to the least possible damage. Canadians have always upheld the value of all humanity. We must never approve military strikes that have the effect of killing innocent people or triggering a humanitarian catastrophe.

At this very tense moment, Canada, working with the United States, must urge restraint in the use of force. We must help the United States to see that it should dedicate its great powers to lead a humanity-centred response in which appropriate military action is augmented by a range of comprehensive measures to truly root out terrorism.

Canada can make a specific contribution to fighting terrorism by such measures as helping to strengthen the anti-terrorist machinery of the UN, including the immediate establishment of an international tribunal to mete out punishment to terrorists; stimulating the new coalition to pursue intelligence sharing, police coordination, passport control, travel surveillance and judicial enforcement against terrorists, with increased funding; and stepping up its work to end international production of fissile material and control of all existing stocks so that future terrorists cannot gain access to nuclear weapons materials.

In calling for a larger view in the midst of this crisis, we must hold to the belief that war itself is not the solution to terrorism. We must not be afraid to say this, based on the conviction of our values.

At this turning point for the world - for that is what it is when terrorists anywhere can covertly destroy the prized assets of the powerful - we need to face up to a hard reality: not raw military strength, nor nuclear weapons, nor missile defences will defend us against those who lash out at humanity itself because of their consuming hatred. Such hatred exploits the brutalities of poverty, oppression, power and greed of modern society. Thus, our long-range defence lies in addressing the great injustices that today are worsening the divisions between rich and poor, the powerful and the vulnerable, the triumphant and the despairing.

There are vital questions that now challenge us. Will we lift ourselves up to get at the real problems of social disorder and the roots of hate? Will we strengthen the international machinery to promote the rule of law and economic and social development? Will we provide genuine hope to the growing numbers of dispossessed?

Honourable senators, what has war produced for us so far? In the 20th century, at least 110 million people were killed in 250 wars, six times as many deaths as in the 19th century. In the year 2000, 40 armed conflicts were fought in the territories of 35 countries. There are 500 million small arms in circulation around the world, arms which kill 500,000 people a year. Governments plead that they have little money for social programs, yet they are currently spending \$800 billion a year on military expenditures, which is 80 times more than the \$10 billion they spend on the entire United Nations system.

This emphasis on militarism stands in sharp contrast to the social deficit of humanity. Almost half the world's people live in abject poverty. Of the 4.6 billion people in developing countries, 1 billion lack access to clean water and 2.4 billion do not have basic sanitation. The richest 1 per cent of the world's people receives as much income as the poorest 57 per cent. Sixty-six countries are now poorer than they were a decade ago.

That is the reality of life for countless people whose anger against the West, whose riches and high standard of living are flaunted daily on television that reaches the most remote corners, is rising in a palpable way. Such a climate is bound to foster the seeds of terrorism. Stamp out today's terrorists without stamping out the problems that spawned them and we will have accomplished little to ensure our safety, for tomorrow's terrorists are the children in today's refugee camps.

A distinguishing feature of our time is that morality and pragmatics have intersected. What we have long known we should do for our brothers and sisters on the planet we now know we must do if we are to survive without the most wrenching dislocations in our lives. It is not news that moral teaching emphasizes the core values of respect for life, liberty, justice and equity, mutual respect and integrity.

It is news that technology has brought us to the point where we all stand on one planet, breathe the same air, are affected by one another's problems and possess the power to decimate all life.

The physical integrity of all human life today demands political policies that enhance, not diminish, life in every region of the planet. The common good requires policies that promote sustainable and socially equitable development and peace in all regions of the world.

Finally, honourable senators, there is hard slogging ahead for Canada to help build the conditions for peace, development, equity and justice. Canada's real strength will be shown in our willingness to use the present catastrophe as a wake-up call to energize the political systems to provide social justice in a shrinking and much more dangerous planet.