

Political Forum Ottawa Report

Turner goes home to raise Canadian flag

I am writing this column on Friday afternoon, as I prepare to drive back to the riding from Ottawa. I say that because by the time you read this, events may have changed dramatically. In fact, I am sure they will.

Last night missiles hit Israel, proving that Saddam Hussein is beyond belief. Today the government MPs met briefly and decided to keep the House of Commons in session until things look a bit clearer. Apparently diplomatic efforts to turn down the tension knob are going all-out.

Again, by the time you read this we may have returned and voted on a resolution to back the United Nations, and our troops who are part of the UN force try-

ing to get Saddam out of the country he invaded. I very much want to cast my vote in favor of that resolution, even though it is an endorsement of war.

No MP likes having to do that. War is the ultimate failure of politics. On a television panel I did the other night with opposition MPs, NDP Dawn Black turned to me and said events in the Persian Gulf proved we had all failed. She was right - we did.

But the debate in Ottawa has been what we should do about dealing with aggression. The war didn't really start after the Jan. 15th UN deadline. Instead, it started in August when Kuwait was taken over.

Not Canada's war?
I don't agree with that argu-

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ment. Canada wants peace and freedom, and will stand up to defend both - and not just selfishly for ourselves. If this world is ever to stop having world wars, then the world has to cooperate. If the Gulf War makes the United Nations the global cop, then it's a war worth fighting. The Canadian troops there are professional, dedicated and brave. They fight for many things this country has always stood for. And they fight proud.

A man whom I respect for his integrity - Liberal MP Ron MacDonald, from Nova Scotia - said in the House during the debate that we are now above partisan politics. There is a time to argue politics and agendas, he said, and a time to support those willing to do battle to protect our very rights.

This in no way lessens the work we must do for peace. But the best long-term option we have for peace is a strong United Nations which countries around the world respect - and don't want to mess with.

MPs this past week were very much aware of the effort that Canada has put into making the UN work. Former prime minister and Liberal leader John Turner walked into the House of Commons and argued passionately that this was no time for us to turn our backs on the best, brightest hope the world has. Canadians have always believed in the UN, he said. So, how - in the

shadows of war - could any of us walk away now?

I listened carefully in the House, and made my own statement. If there were a vote in the House of Commons on supporting the UN, I said, Saddam Hussein would want MPs to vote against it. He would welcome a signal from Canada that we do not stand with our allies; that we would retreat from conflict; and that we would not let our sailors and pilots do the jobs they volunteered and trained for.

So, it has not been an easy time. The tension is thick. Decisions are taken with a sad determination. We all know the consequences.

But this is a fight for peace, and a fight which could lead to the end of the last tinpot dictator's ability to terrorize innocent people.

I'm proud of Canada right now. The flag - removed for the winter - goes back up on my house when I get home tonight.

It's the least I can do.

Queen's Park Report

Pay Equity

In last week's report about the various initiatives put forward by our provincial government, I mentioned improvements to the pay equity legislation; this week I would like to explain these amendments more fully. Labour Minister Bob Mackenzie has stated that he will introduce a bill in the spring to amend the Pay Equity Act, 1987.

The purpose of the Pay Equity Act is to correct the undervaluation of work traditionally performed by women. The central principle behind the Act is that female and male jobs of equal or comparable value to the employer should be paid equally. The value of the work is calculated by using a job evaluation system that measures skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions.

The present comparison approach of the Ontario law is a direct job-to-job method. When the legislation was adopted, it was acknowledged that the achievement of pay equity would not be possible using this approach for female job classes where there were no, or only a few, male job classes of comparable or equal value. Rather than delay passage of the law, the Pay Equity office was required to conduct studies and make recommendations about how this program could be resolved.

The new bill will obligate employers and their bargaining agents, if any, to use two additional approaches for making the job comparisons which are basic to the pay equity process. The proportional comparison will apply to both private and public sector organizations while the proxy comparison will apply to the public sector only. These two additional methods will benefit about 420,000 Ontario working women not previously served by the Act.

The proportional value method permits relative comparisons to be made for all female job classes in an establishment to the male job classes in the same establishment even when there are only a few male job classes on which to base the comparisons. Some workplace parties have already chosen to use this new



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proportional value method in their pay equity plans.

In the public sector organizations where neither job-to-job nor proportional comparisons are effective, where there are no male job classes that can be used for comparisons, the Act will provide for cross-establishment comparisons, called proxy comparisons. This method will allow female job classes to be compared with similar classes in other public sector organizations. We are all aware of the situation of child care workers and others in predominantly female establishments who are recognized as being underpaid for the important work they do. Without proxy comparison, it is not possible for these workers to participate in pay equity.

Information papers describing these amendments in greater detail are expected to be released this month by the Ministry of Labour. Mr. Mackenzie indicated that funds would be available to assist public sector employers having difficulty meeting their pay equity obligations. He also announced financing of \$500,000 to start a Pay Equity Clinic in 1991. The clinic will provide advice and advocacy, primarily for non-unionized women, to assist them in asserting their pay equity rights. "This government upholds equity for women as a right we are determined to defend, in conscience and in law," stated the Minister.

If you require more information about the two additional approaches to pay equity, please contact my Milton office at 878-1729 and my staff will provide you with the details as they become available.

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