

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: Iraq  
Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders**

**Mr ANDREN** (2.52 p.m.)—I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the Member for Calare moving forthwith:

That the House:

- (1) recognise that President Bush has flagged 14 March as the deadline for a decision to be made on an invasion of Iraq;
- (2) recognise that such a decision could well be taken in defiance of a veto by any permanent member of the UN Security Council;
- (3) recognise that such a strike could constitute a breach of international law;
- (4) recognise that chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix said over night that Iraq is cooperating proactively;
- (5) recognise that today is the last sitting day until 18 March 2003 and Australians wish their Parliament to debate our role in any pre-emptive strike as the UK Parliament and US Congress have done; and
- (6) immediately consider government business order of the day No. 43 and that the question be put forthwith.

*Interjection*

*Interjection*

The SPEAKER—The member for Hume!

**Mr ANDREN**—This is a motion from the Australian people, concerned at this likely illegal war.

*Interjection*

*Interjection*

The SPEAKER—The member for Hume will excuse himself from the House under the provisions of standing order 304A.

*The member for Hume then left the chamber.*

**Mr ANDREN**—**Everywhere I have gone in recent months I have been accosted by people wanting to know why their representatives have not been given a chance to vote on arguably the most important military engagement ever contemplated by this nation.** Why is it the most important? Because it is the first time our nation's leader has so

brazenly contemplated assisting in an attack on another state in the absence of any overt attack by that state on a neighbour. Vietnam might be a precedent, but it could be argued that we got engaged in that messy civil war at the behest of the South Vietnamese government, however corrupt that regime turned out to be. We celebrate with deep pride the enormous courage and sacrifice of our service personnel against the invading enemy in two world wars and in Korea, but there is a deep unease in the military ranks today about this rush to war to support a tenuous American agenda that links Saddam Hussein with global terror.

Australia is about to join the British and American administrations in a new and frightening military strategy—the so-called pre-emptive strike. Such pre-emptive action, as opposed to self-defence, is the new military doctrine. A doctrine that any country in the world could take up using this seemingly inevitable Iraq invasion as the precedent—China against Taiwan, North Korea against South Korea or Japan, Pakistan against India, Israel against an Arab state or an Arab state against Israel. This American obsession with regime change and redrawing the geopolitical landscape in the Middle East is about to plunge the world into international lawlessness.

As Australia prepares to join a coalition of the so-called willing in defiance of any Security Council veto by France, Russia or China, this parliament stands mute. The so-called debate on Iraq has ground to a halt, buried on the Notice Paper with the government and opposition combining with the most abject cynicism to ensure it does not reappear. Two weeks ago there were howls of protest that I had gagged debate in this chamber when, the day before Hans Blix presented a crucial weapons inspection report to the Security Council, I sought to have this House vote on my amendment that there be no Australian military engagement in Iraq without a unanimous vote of the five permanent members of the Security Council. That is the position of most Australians. Thirty per cent do not want war against Iraq under any circumstances as things currently stand. Eighty per cent of people in my electorate say no to war without the specific UN mandate. When questioned further, they mean the support of all five veto bearing members. If Saddam were to lob a bomb on a neighbour then Australians would expect the world, including us, to react.

Despite the so-called debate on Iraq, it was always intended to be nothing more than a motion to note the Prime Minister's statement. The opposition is party to this deceit of the Australian people, who expect not only a debate but a vote to see just where their representatives stand on this issue. The US congressional representatives have had that opportunity, as have the British MPs, with 199 challenging Tony Blair's Iraq stance last week. In this place, we have a travesty of democracy and no vote wanted by either side. It is no good stepping out in front of protest marches and making bold statements from the steps of town halls and the backs of trucks if you are not prepared to put your vote on the line, irrespective of its impact on the final decision taken by the government of the day.

This of all issues, in these circumstances, should be a conscience vote. When I was accused of gagging debate, I simply sought to have this question—my amendment—resolved, so the debate could then continue. In fact the debate was not gagged; it continued, for appearance's sake, for a few minutes until it ran into question time on the 13th and was automatically adjourned. To when? The government and opposition pretended it would be resumed this week. But where is it? Locked away at No. 43 on the Notice Paper—buried, hidden, out of sight and, the government and the opposition hope, out of mind.

Indeed, the opposition moved its own amendment to effectively wipe mine off the map, so uncommitted is it to the public demand that there be no engagement in Iraq without a unanimous vote of the permanent members. The opposition amendment reads like a second reading amendment—full of rhetoric. The only significant references to the UN are a vague insistence that the disarmament of Iraq proceed under the authority of the United Nations and condemns the government for committing troops to the Middle East in the absence of any UN authorisation. All worthwhile sentiments no doubt, but what about the invasion of Iraq as opposed to the disarmament? There is no mention of that. Yes, there is opposition to a unilateral attack by the United States, but there is no mention of an attack by a coalition of the killing in the absence of an unambiguous and unanimous permanent member Security Council vote. Indeed, the Leader of the Opposition is on the public record in the Australian Financial Review of 15 January saying:

*There is no case in which we would support US unilateralism.*

But the public read the fine print and the caveat:

*The exception to this position might occur in the case of overwhelming UN Security Council support for military action, but where support for such action was subject to veto ...*

*In other words, we might need to assess such a situation in light of the circumstances of the veto.*

For all the brave words, for all the sprinkling of UN-like sugar throughout the Labor rhetoric, the government and opposition are singing from the same song book. From weekend statements, it also appears that the opposition leader and his cohorts are not prepared to now even countenance the recall of Australian forces in the event of a criminal defiance by the US and Britain of any veto vote from the Security Council. That is what the people who gathered in the streets in their tens of thousands a fortnight ago recognise—the duplicity of the government and especially the opposition around the issue, with the notable exception of those on both sides who have spoken out privately within their party rooms. My parliamentary colleagues the members for New England and Cunningham will probably not get a chance to speak on this motion.

*Interjection*

Mr Bevis—You voted against us!

*Interjection*

The SPEAKER—Do I have to remind the member for Brisbane of his present status?

**Mr ANDREN**—Let me say on their behalf they totally support my comments here. The Greens member goes one step further, with his party against war under any circumstances. I agree with him that conflict prevention should be achieved through effective diplomatic intervention, with preventative peacekeeping deployments in the form of monitors, police aid and assistance personnel under international agreement. I also agree with him that Australia's foreign and security relations should be built on three pillars: peace building, peace making and peacekeeping. Indeed, this government has

dealt Australia out of any independent role in world conflict resolution in this crazy rush to pre-emptive action in likely defiance of any Security Council veto. We could have been, and should have been, an agent for world peace and not a provocateur. Like New Zealand and several other countries, including Scandinavian ones, we had a chance of brokering peace; now we are part of breaking it.

*Interjection*

The SPEAKER—Is the motion seconded?

*An incident having occurred in the gallery— [what Hansard doesn't record is that this 'incident' was a standing ovation from the Public Gallery]*

*Interjection*

The SPEAKER—Order!