



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Foreign Affairs: Iraq

SPEECH

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Speaker Katter, Bob, MP	Question No.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (7.26 pm)—As a young man I volunteered to join the CMF and we were on 24-hour call-up to go and fight in Indonesia against the Indonesian army. I thought it was a war—when someone is shooting at you and you are shooting back, it seems to me that that is a war—but it was delightfully called Konfrontasi. I think that was because something in the Australian psyche rebelled and refused to accept that we were at war with a country more than 10 times our size and with one of the biggest standing armies on earth. It was very scary, to say the least. Later on, many of my friends and schoolmates went to Vietnam, and one of them came back without a leg. So, for someone of my age, I am very conscious of the dangers; and, like so many people of my age, I have a son who is of warfare age. Getting into a ground war in one of these countries does not seem to me to be a very good thing to happen.

Having said that, I always wonder whether it is a good thing to read history books, but when one reads about Mr Hitler one finds that everyone said, 'What a joke, what a laughing stock.' To some degree his antics were laughable: anyone who read *Mein Kampf* would think that the man was a lunatic—and presumably a lot of people would have at least been conscious of what he said in *Mein Kampf*. But when he became head of his country everyone said, 'What possible danger to the world could Germany be?' It was the poorest country on earth: a wheelbarrow of paper money was needed to pay for a tram fare. It was a country with six million unemployed people. It was a country on its knees in every single sense of the word. It had no battleships whatsoever, no frigates or even destroyers. It had no tanks whatsoever. It had no artillery whatsoever. The situation even in 1938, two years before the war, was made clear in submission after submission and in evidence after evidence given at Nuremberg, when every one of the German generals said, 'If you had confronted us in 1938 we would have had nothing to fight you with. The whole Nazi regime would have fallen apart overnight if any single person had confronted us.'

Nobody confronted them—they all kept backing off because they put the decision in the too-hard basket. To quote Winston Churchill, 'Each one is feeding the crocodile, thinking that by feeding the crocodile he will be the last to be eaten. But, of course, all he is doing by feeding the crocodile is making him stronger and guaranteeing that, in the end, he will be eaten.' Those were very perspicacious observations indeed. Some 23 million people had to die to make up for the mistakes that were made or the cowardice or lack of resolution that was involved.

The issue we are debating means there are difficult decisions for everybody in this place. One of the reasons that greatly enhances the difficulties for a small country like Australia—