

MR. SPEAKER

I HAVE JUST RETURNED FROM ETHIOPIA. I APPRECIATE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO REPORT TO MEMBERS, AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE MOMENT, ON WHAT IS HAPPENING THERE, AND WHAT ROLE CANADA IS PLAYING... MORE SPECIFICALLY, TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME OF MY FINDINGS... AND SOME OF MY FEELINGS. WHENEVER I TRAVEL TO AFRICA, IT IS ALWAYS A PRIVILEGE TO REPRESENT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF CANADA. I AM VERY PROUD OF WHAT WE ARE DOING IN AFRICA. AND I WAS RELIEVED AND PLEASED TO SEE MANY POSITIVE THINGS IN ETHIOPIA - OUR CLOSE COOPERATION WITH THE PEOPLE OF THAT COUNTRY... THE DEEP INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL PEOPLE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR DEVELOPMENT... AND ENCOURAGING SIGNS OF PROGRESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST FAMINE.

MY TRIP ALLOWED ME TO MEET WITH A WIDE VARIETY OF OUR PARTNERS - PEOPLE FROM CANADIAN NGOS (SUCH AS THE WORLD UNIVERSITY SERVICE OF CANADA, CANADIAN PHYSICIANS FOR AID AND RELIEF, THE SUDAN INTERIOR MISSION, AND MCGILL UNIVERSITY)... AS WELL AS ETHIOPIAN OFFICIALS, AND SENIOR REPRESENTATIVES OF UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES - INCLUDING MICHAEL PRIESTLEY, WHO IS THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, AND THE RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT THE NORTH. AT MEKELE, I SAW THE FOOD AIRLIFT IN OPERATION, AND AT THE NEARBY SETTLEMENT OF WUKRO, I WATCHED THE FOOD BEING DISTRIBUTED.

WHAT I SAW IN THE NORTH WAS, ABOVE ALL, THE COLOR BROWN - ROUGH TERRAIN, TERRIBLE ROADS, BARREN LAND, PARCHED SOIL... EVERYTHING BROWN, AND INCREDIBLY DRY. THE EARTH, BOILED AND BAKED BY THE SUN, WAS MERE DUST, DRY AND DEAD.

BUT I ALSO SAW A VERY EFFECTIVE AIRLIFT HARD AT WORK, WITH BELGIAN HERCULES, RUSSIAN ANTONOVs, SMALL PLANES AND HELICOPTERS ALL WORKING TOGETHER EFFECTIVELY. I SAW UNLOADING OPERATIONS AT MEKELE, AND IT WAS INSPIRING. UP TO TWENTY BIG PLANES COME IN EACH DAY, BEARING UP TO TWENTY TONNES OF FOOD PER PLANE - MUCH OF IT CANADIAN GRAIN. I SAW THE HARDWORKING TEAMS OF ABOUT EIGHTEEN ETHIOPIANS WHO MEET EACH PLANE AND UNLOAD THAT TWENTY-TONNE CARGO INTO TRUCKS, BY HAND, IN AS LITTLE AS TWELVE MINUTES. ANYONE WHO WITNESSED THEIR ENERGY AND EFFICIENCY, UNDER TRYING CONDITIONS, WOULD NEVER SPEAK LIGHTLY ABOUT PEOPLE NOT TRYING TO HELP THEMSELVES.

AT WUKRO, I SAW A WELL-ORGANIZED FOOD DISTRIBUTION EFFORT, WHICH WAS OPERATING VERY SMOOTHLY. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS - PARTICULARLY MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES BELGES - AND THE RELIEF AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION WERE WORKING CLOSELY TOGETHER.

THE NAMES OF RECIPIENTS WERE RECORDED, VILLAGE BY VILLAGE, ON A REGISTER... AND CHECKED OFF AS THE PEOPLE COLLECTED THEIR RATIONS - THIRTY KILOS PER FAMILY MEMBER, ENOUGH FOR TWO MONTHS. THIS TIME, UNLIKE 1984-85, PEOPLE ARE TAKING THE FOOD BACK TO THEIR VILLAGE - WALKING AS FAR AS FIFTY OR SIXTY KILOMETRES - RATHER THAN GATHERING IN HUGE FEEDING CAMPS AT THE DISTRIBUTION SITE.