Official Developmental Aid

ago, it is true, a striking example where with less money we managed to convince Canadians to contribute more, and this has a significant driving and collective impact on international aid. It is the method advocated by the Government at this time. There is something else we said—they keep referring to our broken promises—one of the thing we promised was to restore sound management, a balanced economy and fair government.

Can we tell people today, and I know the Hon. Member would object, that we will no longer index family allowances, we will no longer index old age security pensions for the first 3 per cent as well, and that we will spend more on external aid? If we ask Canadians to tighten their belts, I think we should also ask people outside our country to tighten their belts, and in the final instance we will have to find new ways of making our money more productive. That is how society works and that is also how a just society works. Mr. Speaker, the lower interest rates and lower inflation rate we are enjoying today, something which benefits all Canadians, remain in the eyes of some people just the Government's doing. But it is not just the Government's doing, it is thanks to the renewed confidence of all Canadians and of outside investors in the Canadian economy. This means we can make more resources available to the people of this country, in some cases with less financial outlay. That is the kind of solution we have chosen, and I repeat, Mr. Speaker, we are a responsible and a fair Government. I do not want to ask Canadians to make more sacrifices for our economy than other countries have to make. That, Mr. Speaker, is the most important promise that we have kept.

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, while I was listening to the Hon. Member, I was reminded of when I was a student, in the days of the former Premier of Quebec, Mr. Duplessis, who had a natural flair for the dramatic turn of phrase. Duplessis, when faced with the external aid proposal made by St. Laurent, then Prime Minister of Canada, remembered the aid he had given to the village of Cabano in the Lower St. Lawrence area which had burnt to the ground. St. Laurent, on the other hand was asking Canadians—this was in the fifties—to realize they had international responsibilities under what was called the Colombo Plan. So Duplessis' slogan became: "Duplessis gives to Cabano and St. Laurent gives to Colombo", to confuse people.

What we must understand today is that the Hon. Member presented this motion because we must remind Canadians that this is our objective. The Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson under whom I had the honour of being elected and of serving as a Member of Parliament, had tabled this UN report which was adopted by Canada in 1970, as the Hon. Member recalled, and we made this our objective: 0.7 of 1 per cent of our Gross National Product would go to external aid.

Due to circumstances, the objective was postponed from 1975 to 1980, at the latest. My party remains committed to achieving this objective as soon as possible. Just because this country is having problems with the economy and the deficit,

and so forth, and I know we are, and I hope it will be temporary, it does not mean we should shirk our international responsibilities.

Not long ago, Canadians reacted with great enthusiasm while Government was hesitant about spending quite considerable sums of money in connection with the famine in Africa. Canadians knew where their responsibilities lay, and the Hon. Member said so himself. It was the Canadian people who pushed the Government. This means that there is in our society a tremendous amount of understanding for these things, and we should not let this understanding for our international responsibilities and international sharing be diverted to the economy or the Budget or the deficit. Because if we do, there will always be people, both in the House of Commons and across the country who will say: They are right, charity begins at home.

● (1820)

[English]

It is a very bad principle to start talking about our international responsibility. We must have a goal. The goal which was set and accepted was .7 of 1 per cent of our Gross National Product. If you start attracting the attention of Canadians to our difficulties and deficit, you stand the chance of killing the base of good will which Canadians have recently manifested toward aid for those who have much less than us. It is not enough to pretend that we are going through difficulties in Canada and to reduce our commitment toward the international community and the people who need so much and look toward Canada as a leader.

My colleague who presented the motion reminded us that young Canadians want leadership on this question. The major preoccupation of young Canadians is the hunger in the world. Young Canadians will pay more taxes than I because I am on my way out while they are on their way in. Yet, their commitment is toward hunger in the world. Their second preoccupation is disarmament. We could link disarmament with development if we understood better what disarmament meant and stopped being paranoid that communists are going to rearm, and always trying to be a step ahead of them. What is going on today on the question of armament is pure madness.

I have no hesitation in connecting the two. If we understood the madness of armament versus disarmament and the immense base of money which could be spent on development, we would understand very well that we would have an easier time. Everything is interlinked. You cannot talk about hunger and poverty and then say that the debate is over and that we will now discuss disarmament. That is all interconnected, Mr. Speaker, as you know very well.

The goal should be to remain committed. That is exactly what my colleague has asked. He asks that we reaffirm that commitment. We may not achieve it, but at least we are committed to it, which means that we will work harder. If you reduce your commitment, of course you work less hard to achieve it. The commitment was reaffirmed at the United