

Statements by Ministers

Canada is highly respected around the world for its fairness to all people regardless of where they live and under what political system. We are highly regarded for our humanitarian response to people finding themselves in crisis situations, be it caused by earthquakes, floods or war.

Canada, under Liberal Governments, has always demonstrated an open-door policy to refugees from around the world. That is why we have been pressing the Government, through private Member's statements and in Question Period, to do something quickly to help the Lebanese refugees, be they caught within the walls of Beirut or outside the borders of Lebanon.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister for External Relations (Mrs. Landry) for her speech on Lebanon this morning. As the Minister said, the events in Lebanon are a matter of concern to us all, and the Members of the New Democratic Party wish to express their compassion for the victims of this civil war, a war that is having increasingly tragic consequences.

We are pleased that the Canadian Government has taken some measures to help Lebanon, such as offering \$500,000 in aid, and we support the efforts of the French Government, both diplomatic and humanitarian.

[*English*]

I am thinking particularly of the actions being taken by France to evacuate the wounded. We know that is a very dangerous undertaking on the part of the French and we appreciate that it is being done.

Having said a word of approval about what the Government has done so far in terms of the \$500,000 in aid, I also want to say, along with my Liberal colleague, that this is not enough. There are many other things which the Government could have been doing up until now which it has not done.

We second the hope of the Government that the Arab Ministerial Committee will be able to bring about the kind of political negotiation for a context in which a peaceful and political solution might be found. We share the view that Syria and all Lebanese parties will have to come to their senses, that this kind of violence is not the

way to create the kind of Lebanon that anyone wants for the future.

• (1120)

We also believe that the Canadian Government could have used its position on the Security Council to have shown leadership. This is a criticism that we have offered before, not only with respect to Lebanon, but with respect to other issues. Why did we lobby for two years to get on the Security Council if we were not going to be a country that takes initiative on the Security Council, whether it is calling for an emergency debate on Lebanon, or whatever the case may be. We did not go on the Security Council only to be spectators, or to wait and see what other people were going to do and then give our support to a French initiative, as in this case, or to an initiative from another country in another case? That has not been Canada's historical role. We hope that the Canadian Government will finally seize the opportunity to show the type of leadership that it so desperately wanted when it sought to be on the Security Council.

We share with all Canadians our feeling for the suffering, not only the obvious suffering of the people of Lebanon, but also the suffering of the Lebanese community here in Canada. Not so long ago this anxiety brought itself to Parliament Hill in the form of the hijacking. People must have a tremendous anxiety about what is going on in their homeland and what is happening to their friends and relatives. As the Hon. Liberal Member has stated, we urge the Government to do more in terms of facilitating and expediting the matter of dealing with the refugees seeking to leave Lebanon from Lebanon, and also those people who are in third countries. The Government must make every possible effort to deal with those refugees who are of concern to the Lebanese community here, and to everyone else.

The Government mentioned *la francophonie*. Both with this issue and other issues, I hope that the Government will do its best to make that a political forum to deal with this type of situation, in the way that the Commonwealth has become a forum for dealing with issues such as South Africa. At its last meeting matters such as human rights violations were very low on the agenda, and it was not a conflict-oriented agenda. If it is going to fulfil the role that it can fulfil in the world, that is something that the Government must seek to make of *la francophonie*.