

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

tion. I hope that the tragic events since last Wednesday have convinced him that this is one of the grave international problems of our time and not the subject of smart aleck debating gambits.

It seems to me there are two aspects to which we should give our earnest attention and concern. The humanitarian problem is assuming massive proportions. The stories coming in daily of disease, suffering and death among the hopeless millions of refugees should move all of us to compassion and the government to greater action. I have commended the grant of \$2 million; but surely in the face of such an immense tragedy it is time to look at the question again and to seek new avenues for translating the concern of the Canadian people into action by their government.

The United States has increased its financial contribution; it has sent large military transport aircraft. I asked the other day what this country planned. The director of Oxfam, Dr. Pierre Cournoyer, has been telling the people of this country some stirring things about the problems in Calcutta and the depth of the human tragedy being played out in the area.

● (10:00 p.m.)

I hope that the government will not delay or procrastinate on this matter but will assist all non-governmental organizations desirous of helping and able to help. I hope it will use its resources to ameliorate the suffering. I believe there will be a disposition in all corners of this House to support increased efforts to help in a case where it is so painfully obvious that much help is needed.

The other aspect of the case, and naturally it is related to and indeed antecedent to the other, is the political question. This is not now a domestic matter. One country, India, has received millions of citizens of another land. It cannot be assumed that India, with its own grave problems, can assume this burden. Some way must be found whereby the millions of East Pakistanian refugees will return to their homes. This will require from the Pakistan government some attitudes and adjustments which have not yet, so far as we know, been apparent.

The existing situation threatens not only the economy and poverty of India but the peace of the world. It is incumbent upon all friendly states to do their part to help further a solution. Canada is a member of the Commonwealth. India and Pakistan are fellow members. Can this body not be used?

The United Nations, of which we are charter member, has various organs and procedures for taking up matters which constitute a threat to world peace. Why does Canada not take some initiative in having the matter considered by the UN? Surely some kind of UN presence should be put into being to look carefully into the serious and threatening situation. The world cannot allow another large group of refugees to be cast adrift for years. Surely the experience of the Palestinian refugees should jolt us out of complacency and stir us into action. Something must be done soon. I ask the government not to hesitate in giving leadership. It is for such leadership that I call once more.

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

Mr. Barnett J. Danson (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) is as deeply concerned about this tragic situation as is the government.

The government is acutely aware of the problems created for India and for the stability of South Asia by the influx of refugees from East Pakistan. As we all know, the origins of this problem lie not in India itself but in East Pakistan and in the breakdown of discussions between the government of Pakistan and the Awami League. In common with other governments, Canada has urged on the government of Pakistan the need to resume the search for a political solution and to establish conditions which will permit refugees from East Pakistan to return to their homes. We have also offered relief assistance to East Pakistan. Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, there is little that outside governments, no matter how well disposed, can do in a situation of this kind where the contending parties would be understandably sensitive to any attempt to prescribe, much less impose, a solution.

Pending a political settlement, the problem of caring for the Pakistan refugees in India is one which is receiving the urgent attention of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme the League of Red Cross Societies and other international organizations. A number of countries have indicated their intention to share some of the burden thrust upon the government of India. It is clear that the amount of aid for relief purposes will depend not only on the number of refugees now in India but on the rate of influx, the length of time before a settlement is reached and the willingness of refugees to be repatriated at that time, together with a large number of additional factors which cannot be determined at this time. Every effort is being made to obtain the information on which an assessment of future requirements can be made and all appropriate governmental, intergovernmental and private organizations are being consulted in this process.

Having said this, I can assure the House that we are in close and constant touch with the United Nations family of organizations with a view to assisting, in so far as we can perform a useful and desired role, in bringing about an accommodation which will provide the greatest equity for those directly concerned. Canada is a member of the Aid to Pakistan consortium and is taking an active role in the consideration which that body is giving to the situation in Pakistan. Within the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development and within the International Monetary Fund we intend to explore with other interested groups the means whereby appropriate arrangements for the future well-being of all concerned can be assisted.

Officials of the Canadian government are in close contact with the government of Pakistan and other countries which share our interest in reaching an appropriate program. It is our view that through close collaboration with other countries we can contribute most effectively to creating conditions in which a political settlement will be possible. The ultimate responsibility for reaching that