

Aid to Pakistan Refugees

ations in India. Part will be provided to the government of India in the form of goods and services.

Different forms of assistance are required. In our view, and that of the government of India, one appropriate kind of assistance would be debt relief to ease the burden on the Indian economy. The Aid to India Consortium, meeting on October 26, discussed this particular form of aid. To be effective, such relief requires the concerted efforts and co-operation of other major donors, and Canada is ready to meet other donors to discuss this question.

Continued, increased and effective aid is a question of the greatest urgency. It will help to alleviate the suffering of those caught up in this human tragedy. Dealing with this aspect of the problem can also help to reduce tension. But it does not offer any solution to the underlying problem. A political solution must be found which will allow the refugees to return to a secure and democratic society in East Pakistan. I regret, Mr. Speaker, that at the moment I see little hope of an early resolution of the problem. Canada once again joins with other nations in urging upon the governments of India and Pakistan restraint and forbearance in the face of the grave difficulties that must be overcome before a lasting settlement can be achieved.

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, there have been times in the past when I have taken exception to the actions and pronouncements of the minister and, no doubt, there will be times in the future when I shall do so. But this is not one of them. I applaud what the hon. gentleman has said. It would be easy for a member speaking for the opposition to say that Canada's contribution should be greater. But it would be iniquitous to say it should be less.

I come from one of the disadvantaged areas of Canada, a part which has too little of the economic assets of this country, and the situation is not improving in that respect. I know that among the narrow-minded and the small of heart there is a tendency to say that charity begins at home. My own observations lead me to believe that people who say this are never very charitable at home, either. So I can say to the minister that I have no intention, no matter what may lie ahead, to try to take political advantage of the fact that a goodly sum will be voted in this case.

I have reservations about some of our external aid programs and I believe the time has come to examine them. But this is not in that category. The need is so great, so compelling and so urgent that, while we want to know more precisely the form the aid will take, I applaud wholeheartedly the announcement by the government and support it with every fibre of my being. I hope there will be no wastage and administrative duplication. I hope every effort will be made and every avenue canvassed to give assistance.

I enthusiastically concur in what the minister said about the efforts of the government of India and the people of India. They have been dealing with a massive burden for which they did not ask and which they should not and cannot bear alone. Therefore we, as part of the international community, must respond as the minister has indicated we are responding. We must assist; we must do our part. Even if the minister had announced double the

aid we are going to give we would still be doing far, far less than what is being done by India, a land with such immense economic and political problems of its own. The international community must continue to help; it must do more.

I welcome this new move announced by the government. I hope the governments of the provinces will help as well, and I note that some of them have made special efforts in this regard. But most important of all, I believe, is the response not of Canada's governments but of Canada's citizens. I think this, above all, is the way that we should show the extent of our compassion for what is perhaps the greatest human tragedy in modern times. Most of our people are in and of the Christian tradition. In these days when there has been a flowering of the ecumenical spirit and a breaking down of the walls of bigotry and intolerance I think this is a magnificent opportunity for people of the Christian fold to show compassion and concern for their fellow humans of a different theological belief.

I note too the minister's reference to the political situation and I feel that I must share his general outlook, which is somewhat pessimistic. I do hope that our government is using all its resources, bilaterally, within the Commonwealth and in the United Nations, to do what can be done on the political front to bring about a solution. I say here what I said in India and in Pakistan a few months ago, that war between these two Commonwealth states is an intolerable concept, something that would merely compound to the nth degree the terrible problems that already exist. Therefore something between the painful tragic status quo and war must be achieved. We cannot see repeated in the Far East the terrible, painful continuum of refugees which for so long has prevailed in the Middle East. I urge the government to press for a solution in every possible way. I also urge the government of Pakistan—and I have not joined the "hate Pakistan league"—to do everything within their country to assuage the difficulties and mitigate this terrible human problem.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I shall be relatively short. I join the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) in congratulating the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) for the step that he has announced. It is always very difficult to say just how much aid should be given because one could argue over the precise amount. But I think we can proudly say that the announcement of the minister represents a generous contribution to assist the refugees. In making this gesture to assist and aid the suffering in that unhappy part of the world I am certain the minister spoke for all Canadians.

I think that countries like Canada should make a greater effort than they have made until now—I do not say that in criticism of any government or minister—in order to seek a political solution. It is very frustrating to a good many people in the world, as it should be to members of this House, that it is possible for a military clique in a country to upset the decision of the people of that country and to oust those who were democratically elected by the people to represent them in the Parliament of that country and substitute for the democratic process a military dictatorship, which is in fact what we have in Pakistan now, and get away with it, despite the fact that millions of

[Mr. Sharp.]