

Bretton Woods Agreements Act

people in countries like Nicaragua do not have running water or easy access to clean water. They do not have access to water other than walking long distances to get it.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): Thanks to the Somozas.

Mr. Riis: As my colleague from Brant (Mr. Blackburn) says, thanks to the Somozas. That is the type of regime that was not interested in assisting the people of Nicaragua. We can say the same thing about other Central American and Latin American countries as well. These international agencies that we support financially are making decisions that in a sense reflect, if I can use the term, the rather extreme right-wing view of the Reagan administration. What we are saying is that Canadian taxpayers—I am just talking about the ordinary Canadian citizen who pays taxes and provides us with most of the tax revenue—are funding the IMF, the World Bank and other institutions which are supporting, by definition now, the right-wing regimes of the world at the expense of the non-right-wing regimes. Some countries are receiving assistance. The private sector in some countries is receiving assistance but in other countries that support and assistance is being removed and cut off.

● (1140)

It is important for Canada to recognize that we are part of a process that is making the poorer nations poorer and the richer nations relatively richer. We are part of the process that is widening the gap between those who have and those who have not. We have seen that happen in countries like the United States and Canada. A report the other day pointed out that the gap between the rich and the poor, using those general terms in our society, is increasing despite many, many programs that we have introduced over the last number of decades, and we have not brought together those extremes in our society. In fact, they have grown further apart than ever. What has happened within Canada and within the United States is now happening on a global scale. The poor countries are relatively poorer than they were when organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank were introduced in the 1940s.

Those are some of my concerns. I realize today is the day that we speak about this Bill only in principle. That is why I have flagged only the principle of the Bill and some of the concerns of that principle we have as New Democrats. In committee we will be much more specific as to how we feel this Bill should be changed to ensure that Canada plays a much more active and progressive role, in the development of the policies of these particular agencies.

Canada, in my estimation, has been relatively mute when it comes to the IMF and the World Bank supporting what is going on in Chile today and not supporting those organizations in the early 1970s when there was a different political regime in that country. For example, when the Allende Government was elected by the people of Chile—and I want to emphasize that it was a government that was elected in an open election by the people of Chile—the institutions which we have been addressing today cut off support to that country simply

because the government in power did not sit well with the American administration of the day. The people of Chile chose that government. I wonder whether Canada should have stood passively by when these critical funding institutions said: "We are cutting off support now that you have had a change in political orientation". This is just the same as El Salvador and Nicaragua. One obtains support from the IMF and the other does not obtain support from the IMF.

I think it is important that while this is a reasonably straightforward administrative Bill that simply consolidates existing legislation and makes a change in how the sums of money that Canada contributes is evaluated each year—in other words, using the estimates as opposed to Parliament's authority—we do have some concerns about Canada's ongoing participation in these organizations. We support these organizations in principle. We support the role of Canada participating as a major player, but we want to see Canada take a much more progressive and active role in developing policies within these organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank that will assist them in ensuring their lending practices, their financial support practices, are equitable and that they assist the people of the developing countries as opposed to maintaining certain political regimes at the expense of other political regimes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

[*Translation*]

The Hon. Member for Châteauguay (Mr. Lopez) rises for a question or a comment?

Mr. Lopez: I am glad to rise again today to deal with this issue, Mr. Speaker. I want to congratulate the previous speaker for his remarks which were much more proper and in order than those expressed by the Hon. Member who rose before him last night and continued her remarks this morning. I commend him, and he can certainly take credit first of all—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I might remind the Hon. Member that he should direct his comments or questions to the remarks made by the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis), without any reference to those made by the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps). The Hon. Member has again the floor.

Mr. Lopez: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is because there was a connection between their respective remarks and I meant to continue in the same direction. I am somewhat concerned about the fact that the Hon. Member seems to worry a lot about the need to help the poor and the developing or underdeveloped countries of the world—mind your, I have nothing against that—but I feel that all Canadians and all members of Parliament should be concerned first and foremost with their own economic situation. Because charity begins at home, we should not be interested first in what is going in the outside world. His remarks, however, were quite consistent with the political thrust of his party which is to help socialist or