

Adjournment Debate

regional clauses that would provide them with rates similar to those in the private sector, as the hon. member mentioned earlier.

I am pleased that the matter has been raised. I do not foresee any solution in the near future. I am ready to discuss that problem with the union. I am personally in favour of regional negotiations, because sometimes national rates do not fulfill their objectives. Therefore, I would rather favour regional negotiations, but, under the present circumstances, and considering standards are not met, I can see no reason why there should be special allowances just for those places.

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS—WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE IN ROME—
PROPOSAL BY UNITED STATES TO ESTABLISH EXPORT
PLANNING GROUP

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, since the World Food Conference ended in Rome we have heard nothing from the Canadian government except self-congratulations about our role there. If the rhetoric of the government were food, the world would have a massive case of indigestion. The fact is that the government has, as usual, set up a smoke screen of verbiage. The Broadway playwright who gave us "Promises, Promises" could not hold a candle to this government. Instead of being congratulated the government ought to be castigated, for the fact is that it failed to respond adequately to the world food crisis with even emergency or long term measures.

We got a great press around the world for our pledge of one million tons of food grains per year for three years. The world thinks that we are rushing food to starving people. What a fraud! The fact is that it will be one year from the Rome conference before any of that food is in anyone's mouth. There may be millions starving, but they will have to wait for another crop year, and then have to wait while we work out transportation arrangements. I asked the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) on November 20 what is the earliest month in 1975 in which food would be sent from Canada, what countries would receive it, and what transportation arrangements were being made. The minister said that this information would be in his statement subsequently made in the House last Friday. But you can search that statement in vain for these specific answers.

Then there is the question of the \$50 million in immediate assistance. I quote from the opening speech made in Rome by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen) as follows:

As an earnest of Canada's commitment to the solution of the world food problem, I am pleased to announce that the Canadian government has decided to allocate at once the sum of \$50 million of Canada's development assistance to be used in ways which will make an effective impact on the present critical situation.

Since then many members have been trying to find out how and where this \$50 million will be spent. Just today, almost a month after the minister made that statement, he was unable to provide specific information to my question. Yet the minister says:

I regard the problem of hunger as great if not greater than any of the other global problems.

[Mr. Chrétien.]

Well, if this is how we respond to an emergency, our long range solutions for the alleviation of starvation will likely show up in the next century.

● (2210)

What is holding up the immediate implementation of this aid? Can it be the grain inspectors' strike, which has virtually halted grain movements out of Canada? If so, let the government state it clearly and then tell us what it is doing to end the strike. At least let us know that the government is trying to do something, particularly for the people of Bangladesh. Only today I had a lengthy conversation with an official of that country who confirmed a report in the *New York Times*, November 24 that thousands of people in Jamalpur, 120 miles northwest of Dacca, are destitute because of crop failures, the effects of floods and now severe cold:

What's the use of feeding them?

This is what a distraught international official said of these victims.

They are going to die anyway, if not by hunger, surely by cold.

In this district the people get a ration of a quarter of a pound of watery gruel made of rice and lentils once a day; they are being kept alive on what is technically a starvation diet.

I refuse to believe that Canada could not find a way to get food, not to mention clothing, to these hapless men, women and children if we really cared. Why not an airlift? Why could we not apply some of that \$50 million to flying emergency supplies to people in real emergency conditions this winter? Why cannot we back up our words at international conferences with immediate action?

Why is there starvation in a world that has been blessed with the Green Revolution? I spoke of Bangladesh. The people of Bangladesh know how to grow food and they could feed several times their population. But they cannot afford the capital investment needed. Last year Bangladesh spent \$40 million on oil imports. This year the bill is \$160 million. That is the story of the developing countries. They are being squeezed out of existence by international energy politics. When developing countries cannot afford energy, they cannot produce fertilizer and crop yields plunge. There must be monetary and trade reform at the international level so that developing countries can be enabled to produce their own food.

All of this is well known. The external affairs minister himself said in the most important sentence of his speech in Rome:

Canada emphatically supports the development of increased food production capacity by developing countries as the key to an anti-hunger strategy.

This brings us to the structural reform I advocated in a question to the minister on October 10 in which I suggested that emergency measures to obviate famine be contained within a total strategy for development. But our response is inadequate, measured in terms of emergency aid or long-range development.

A total strategy, as the United Nations keeps telling us, involves a better trade deal for the developing countries so they can help themselves and thus close the rich-poor gap. Yet Canada's history in trade negotiations involving de-