

Adjournment Debate

bulk products transportation have been bought for that purpose, and the Quebec City harbour will become a transfer port for this coal.

[*English*]

CN's participation in the CAST group in the past has provided a healthy return on its investment. It has also given CN a considerable share of Canada's container traffic—I suppose Halifax has benefited from it—and is helping CN to develop into a dynamic and fully integrated transportation company. Its recent investments are fully expected to reinforce this position.

[*Translation*]

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the CAST expansion project will also mean direct and indirect benefits for the port of Montreal. The hon. member seems to be complaining, but when it suits the port of Halifax, of course it does not suit the port of Montreal and vice versa. In this instance this can help the port of Montreal harbour, and a study by the National Harbours Commission has estimated the impact to be some \$56.6 million. The first tangible result, of course, will be the lease of 22 acres of land in the eastern part of the port of Montreal.

[*English*]

So, if CN through its investment in CAST is contributing to shipbuilding employment in some other countries, it is also clearly creating job opportunities in Canada.

The government is concerned about this problem. It has requested CN to report back every six months on the status of its involvement so as to keep the matter under continuous review.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION—CANADIAN POSITION ON
INFANT FORMULA FOR THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, recently I asked a question of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) concerning Canada's preference for mere recommendations as opposed to regulations in its work at the World Health Organization on an international code of marketing of breast milk substitutes.

● (2220)

My concern was, and is, that Canada is abandoning whatever pretence it has to friendship with the peoples of developing countries and is becoming a mouthpiece for the interests and the ethos of multinational food corporations. The minister's assurances in the House that she is as concerned about Third World children as she is about Canadian children and that the government is as committed to fighting poverty overseas as it is here in Canada would be humorous, if they were not also frightening. I say this considering the lethargy which the minister has displayed in doing anything other than posturing about the recommendations of the Commission on the Year of the Child here in Canada.

Her answer subsequently to me in a letter takes the tack of claiming that the federal government must argue for recommendations only because to argue for regulations would impinge on provincial jurisdiction. This is a complete abdication of Canada's international responsibilities as a nation. It is a shameful cop-out.

Babies the world over are dying; this is the reality of the matter. They are dying because of the misplaced trust which our civilization puts in technological means over and above the natural way which is available to mothers, regardless of their economic status and regardless of their water supply, and is also because of the further corruption of this over-emphasis on professional care by the global profit-seeking of multinational corporations.

Other industrialized countries such as Sweden and Switzerland have been willing to support a strong code. Why not Canada? Is it because we, too, have Third World conditions in our own backyard which give rise to exploitation? If so, we would therefore have to stand up to the multinationals here, as well as in Burma or Nigeria, were we to adopt a strict code. No doubt this is part of it. That leads me to the unhappy conclusion that contrary to the minister's usual self-righteous effusions, we do not have just a case of callousness here but also a case of cowardice.

When I first asked this question, I did so because at the time the World Health Assembly executive was meeting in Geneva to formulate policy recommendations to be made to the meeting of the 34th assembly of the World Health Organization in May of 1981. In the House, and in a subsequent letter, the minister claimed, and rightly so—at least in terms of chronology—that she could not tell me exactly what the latest developments were with regard to Canada's position. She could not tell me whether or not it was, in fact, to be changed from supporting recommendations to supporting regulations.

Given that the meeting in Geneva ends tomorrow and that therefore, presumably, this matter has been discussed in Geneva, I wonder if the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Frith) in addition to the prepared statement he no doubt has ready to read to us might also be able to comment on whether or not the lamentable position of Canada in this regard has been changed and whether or not, as a result of representations made to the government, the health department took a different stand in Geneva and Canadians might now have cause to feel that once again they are on the side of mothers and children in the Third World and not on the side of corporations like Nestlé.

Mr. Doug Frith (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I suppose I should begin my response to the hon. member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie) by pointing out to him that the government is far from being a defender of large multinationals. Contrary to the way he feels that the minister has answered his question previously in the House, in my view the minister has consistently stated that her viewpoint and that of the department is that breast feeding is the superior method, if you will, of feeding children. Her position has never been one