

Petitions

or indirectly for forced resettlement and villagization programs; and that food relief is not misappropriated for military forces. I think the Minister's statement would have been more useful and reassuring to Canadians if she had addressed some of these substantive issues.

With regard to the longer-term undertakings necessary to try to reverse the current cycle of famine and starvation in Ethiopia, we believe that we need to move away from the current large mega-project approach and focus more of our attention and money on smaller local aid programs geared to the population's needs and capabilities. This shift in emphasis has been under discussion for some time and I think it would be helpful, for both Ethiopia and other nations, if the Minister would finally announce the long promised new CIDA policy that so many have for so long been waiting. Unfortunately, this new policy appears to have become bogged down in Cabinet. I would like to take this opportunity to urge the Minister and her cabinet colleagues to finally outline to this House and to the country what new and hopefully decentralized CIDA policy they have in mind.

The current cycle of famine and starvation places great strains on the aid community's efforts to address the longer-term structural, agricultural and environmental problems at the heart of the problem in Ethiopia. I would caution, however, that this dilemma should not be looked at primarily as a question of the allocation of scarce financial resources. In this regard we believe that our longer-term projects should not be allowed to suffer in order to find the funds necessary to respond to current or future hunger crises. Instead, I would argue that each and every famine situation requires an infusion of significant new funds to meet the immediate threat so that many of our longer-term projects can proceed relatively unhindered. Otherwise we are merely engaged in band-aid solutions that will ultimately do little to alleviate the suffering in Ethiopia.

[Translation]

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about the problem of the Ethiopian government's population displacement program. Initially, the purpose of the program was to move residents of famine-stricken areas to the southern part of the country where the land is more fertile. However, the program has become very controversial. The Ethiopian government's approach is clumsy and dictatorial. Its intentions are far more political than humanitarian. It seems that residents of the North are being forced to move to more southerly regions which, unfortunately, are not ready to receive them.

Last week, as the Minister herself reported, there were rumours that the Ethiopian army had shot twenty people who refused to take part in the program. The Minister must try and find out whether these allegations are true.

It is also said that camps in the North, the same camps that are receiving supplies from international agencies, are being used by the Ethiopian government as transit centres for its massive displacement programs. With all these allegations, the

Canadian Government is in a very uncomfortable situation. Only two countries are helping to facilitate these moves, and Canada is one of them. With these persistent rumours, the question arises whether Canada should continue to help the Ethiopian government displace all these people.

• (1210)

[English]

Insofar as it concerns the Canadian Government sponsored resettlement programs in Ethiopia which are run by NGO's and not the Ethiopian Government, there seems to be evidence that the result has been an appreciable improvement in living conditions. However, other resettlement programs may not have been as beneficial.

In addition, irrespective of the relative benefit of any particular resettlement program, we cannot support the forced deportation of starving Ethiopians to resettlement areas, Canadian or otherwise. As such, I welcome the Minister's statement that any resettlement program must be strictly voluntary.

However, I must also point out that she has again failed to outline exactly what steps she plans to implement to ensure that resettlement to Canadian sponsored resettlement areas or any resettlement area is done on a purely voluntary basis. Without such a clear outline of practices, guidelines and verification procedures, I fear the Minister's statement may in fact turn out to be more rhetorical than real. Once again, the Minister should have been more forthcoming on specifics.

I want to join with my Liberal colleague in recognizing the fact that it is the war, insurrection, or revolution in Ethiopia that has caused much of the difficulty we face in ensuring that aid is properly distributed in that country. I join with him, as I am sure will others in the House, in asking the Government to pursue whatever means and agencies it can find, with other nations through the UN or elsewhere, to ensure that peace is brought to Ethiopia soon as a result of international co-operation in that regard.

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PETITIONS

BLOCK AVERAGING OF INCOME

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour and duty to present two petitions, one from a number of residents of Frontier, Saskatchewan, and the second from residents of the Piapot and Maple Creek districts in Saskatchewan. Both petitions concern the matter of five-year block averaging for farmers.

The petitioners note that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) in December, 1987, indicated his intention to eliminate block averaging. The petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to take the necessary steps to retain block