

It is time that the minister learned to listen and hear the concerns of this important constituency.

* * *

ETHIOPIA

Hon. David MacDonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the serious situation in famine-threatened parts of northern Ethiopia, particularly the provinces of Wollo, Tigre and Eritrea, which presently affects the lives of 4.5 million people, recent reports indicate that in fact the small belg rains, which took place earlier this month, have provided some hope. There is the availability of seed for farmers, the migration of people has been quite limited and, in fact, the international effort, with the support of the Ethiopian relief agencies, has provided much needed assistance through the southern route.

Earlier this week the Minister for External Relations had a very important meeting with her colleagues in New York. They were trying to find a way to deal with the present situation in Ethiopia, to which the Government of Ethiopia itself responded just the day before yesterday, adding that everything that could be done will be done by it in order to ensure that relief supplies would reach all those in need of assistance. More importantly, they said and I quote:

As regards the call for peace and national reconciliation, the Ethiopian government wishes to assure the international community of its continued commitment to begin substantive peace talks with the EPLF and other rebel groups and of its determination to reach peaceful political solutions.

We would all hope, Mr. Speaker, that peace would be the final solution to a very threatened and endangered people.

* * *

DIEFENBAKER CENTRE

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, Canadians everywhere honour the memory of the late John George Diefenbaker. As the only Prime Minister from Saskatchewan and by far the most successful from western Canada, he is fondly remembered as a great civil libertarian and friend of ordinary people.

In recognition of Mr. Diefenbaker's contribution to Canadian public life, the Diefenbaker Centre was built

ten years ago on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River at the University of Saskatchewan. It houses the Diefenbaker Museum and the Diefenbaker papers and it is an important archive both for the long-term member from Prince Albert and for a major part of Canadian history.

Now the centre is threatened by a shortage of operating funds. The centre has received its last grant and will close by the end of June unless new funding is provided by the federal government. Given the massive cuts to education funding by the federal government, the university is not in a position to take up the slack.

The federal government must provide funding for this important piece of Canadian heritage. With our nation under great stress, it is more important than ever that we remember our common heritage, not emphasize our differences. When will this government honour Diefenbaker's vision, rather than permit it to be extinguished?

* * *

LENDING INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Mr. Speaker, a constituent of mine recently brought to my attention the alarming leeway with which some of our credit card companies and lending institutions are allowed to operate in this country.

This particular customer of one of the major credit card companies has forwarded to me a statement indicating that he was charged \$75.17 interest on an outstanding loan in the amount of \$80 for a period of 18 days. By some fancy manoeuvring the credit card company was able to invoice this individual that amount.

Because this particular individual questioned this exorbitant charge for which he had been invoiced, and because he protested so loudly, the company reacted and reconsidered. It agreed to credit him on a future billing, so that he ends up paying \$4.83 instead of \$75.17. The company claimed that it was not in error, this was just a goodwill gesture.

One wonders how many Canadians who are not influential have been duped by lending institutions such as credit card companies. It is worrisome to think that unless customers put up a loud protest, many of them ultimately end up paying too much for a service.