

In closing, I am glad to talk about the Commonwealth. I had many experiences with this good association. My first international meeting was a Commonwealth meeting; but this question of national defence might well have been discussed in the House of Commons, too.

Ms. Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, we in the New Democratic Party join with others in the observance of Commonwealth Day. We are pleased to note that Canada has increased the number of scholarships from 300 to 500 for Commonwealth students. We, too, would have to say there is nothing particularly controversial about our recognition of Commonwealth Day, and while I welcome the Minister making statements in the House, as I have done before, I hope he will also make statements on somewhat more controversial matters, such as the proposed signing of a treaty with the United States relating to the northern warning system. I hope he will be encouraged to make statements on matters not only of fundamental importance but also of some real controversy. No matter how much we may try to slough it off, this matter is of great concern and the subject of controversy in Canada.

May I ask the Minister if there are other initiatives relating to the Commonwealth which he has in mind? For example, does he think it might be useful to follow up the New Delhi Summit, and perhaps he already has, of a year or so ago?

Mr. Speaker: With great respect, is the Hon. Member's statement finished and we are now embarking on a question? Should I understand it to be that way? Does she wish this to be treated as questions to the Minister?

Ms. Jewett: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Jewett: Would the Minister see Canada playing a larger role in the Commonwealth Pacific? Many of the island nations are only now emerging into a decolonization situation; does he see our playing a large role in the Commonwealth Pacific?

Does he not feel that at this time he might have addressed more the North-South issue? We have tended to forget that a bit. Many of the Commonwealth countries are, of course, developing nations. Would the Minister not soon be prepared to reinstate the \$180 million which was removed from official development assistance and, indeed, increase that amount? Is that not as important as spending an additional \$100 million on our troops in Europe?

Finally, does the Minister have any knowledge as to whether Radio-Canada International is going to suffer cuts within the CBC? If so, would he—

Mr. Speaker: I am forced to rise for two reasons. One, there are a large number of questions; two, the questions must be relevant to the statement made by the Minister. At least one or two of the Member's questions were directly relevant, but I am not sure about the others.

Commonwealth Day

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, in light of the latitude of the responses by my two friends on the other side, I might be permitted to say how pleased I am to note the new-found interest by the spokesman of the Liberal Party in Statements by Ministers in the House of Commons. I also accept the observations made by my colleague representing the New Democratic Party.

With regard to the Commonwealth, our first emphasis—because the issue arose there first—has been to try and bring some new vitality to relations between Canada and some of the Commonwealth members in the Caribbean area. We were pleased at the tone and the possibility of progress found when the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Mulroney) met with Caribbean Commonwealth Prime Ministers. There is, of course, a very significant job to be done in the Commonwealth Pacific. I think it is an open question as to whether it is more appropriate for Canada or other Commonwealth countries with similar wealth to take a role of leadership in that region. That is an indication of my current attitude and I would be very pleased to discuss that with the Hon. Member and others.

I do not want this to be taken in any way as criticism of former Governments, but it seems to me that one of the aspects about the Commonwealth that we should bear in mind is precisely that it is so easy to take it for granted. I think there is some real advantage to having a day like this on which we can draw attention to an organization which has very real opportunities open to us, including reaching across lines which have traditionally been defined as North-South. Those do not always arise just in economic spheres. They arise, for example, with regard to the present crisis in UNESCO. It occurs to me that there may well be some opportunity to make better use of the Commonwealth connection in trying to bring progress and achieve real reforms in an organization of that kind.

With regard to overseas development assistance, I am not here to argue figures with the Hon. Member, as I seem to have to do with every statement I make at this time. There were reductions in the summer of last year by the former Government, some of which were reinstated. There was a statement made by my colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), in November. There has been very significant spending on the fund for Africa, as the Hon. Member knows because she has encouraged us on it. I share her commitment to increasing Canada's activity in overseas development assistance; I think the Hon. Member for Saint-Maurice (Mr. Chrétien) shares that same commitment, and I will be looking for their help in years ahead to ensure that we are able to reflect that commitment in reality.

Mr. Speaker: I have time for one more question.

Ms. Jewett: Mr. Speaker, I expect the Minister will also comment on the New Delhi peace initiative.

My final question goes back to the scholarships for Commonwealth students. Would the Minister consider a grant system to compensate for the increased tuition fees now being