

*The Budget—Mr. I. Pelletier*

lem should have suddenly appeared at this particular moment?

In his opening address to the World Food Conference on November 5, the Secretary General of United Nations stated:

The situation is indeed critical. World food production which had shown a disastrous decline in 1972 has reached levels which in the historical perspective may be reasonably high, but have never allowed to a security margin nor to meet the spiralling demand... From now on, to alleviate, the difficulties of the world strategic reserve, we can only rely on about 25 million hectares of tillable land unused in the land banks of the United States.

The Conference held in Rome has provided most of the delegation with the opportunity to state openly their policy with regard to the serious food problem. In one of the most noted statements during the Rome Conference, the Honourable General Carlos Romulo

● (1640)

[English]

—Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines and chairman of the Philippine delegation to the UN food conference, in a speech entitled "What went wrong?" said:

I dare suggest to my fellow delegates from developing countries that there must be something wrong with our development plans, something wrong with our objectives and priorities, something terribly and disastrously wrong, when 25 or even 30 years of independence and development have only led us to this sorry pass, to this crisis—and I know it is an overused word, but I can find no real equivalent—to this crisis of world hunger.

What went wrong? Where did we take the wrong turning? I am aware, deeply aware, of the aspirations and expectations of our peoples, or—more accurately—of their leaders and planners and decision-makers. After centuries of colonial exploitation, of producing raw materials for the industries of the metropolis, of being captive markets for its manufactures, of being "hewers of wood and drawers of water", we were driven by the desire, by the urgent political need, to develop our own economies, to be economically independent, to give employment to the landless workers crowding into our new cities, to mean something in the world, to be respected and taken into account, to find our "place in the sun".

Surely, this was not wrong. Surely this was a legitimate objective, a legitimate aspiration.

What was wrong, what went wrong, I dare suggest to my colleagues from developing countries, was our understanding and appreciation of priorities and of the economic and social, and by that token also the political realities.

The question, the hard question, the unavoidable question, we must now ask ourselves is this. What is the purpose, what is the use, of brand-new factories, or even of a nuclear device, when millions of our people do not have enough to eat? When an unacceptable proportion of our children die before leaving infancy? When those who survive are stunted physically and mentally? What price, then, a nuclear bomb or the missile to carry it across the globe?

[Translation]

Similar remarks, Mr. Speaker, have been made by many heads of delegation in respect of developing countries themselves. Some reproaches have been directed to the developing countries for the exercise percentage of their gross national product earmarked yearly for national defence.

Some delegations have also pointed out the fact that several developing countries accept to make investments sometimes sumptuous but of little importance for the basic development of their social and economic potential. Sever-

[Mr. Pelletier (Sherbrooke).]

al reproaches may certainly be directed to the developing countries. But the same is true, Mr. Speaker, for the developed countries, and in this respect, I think the latter have a major responsibility to shoulder for the present world food crisis.

Most of the developed countries' delegations at the Rome Conference have been disappointed, and this in many respects. Everyone thought that the developed countries represented at the Rome Conference would make concrete propositions and contribute a substantial aid for the difficult food problem which is rampant in many parts of the world. For many countries faced with serious food problems, it has been a great disappointment. We can say, Mr. Speaker, that amongst all the countries which have sent a delegation at the Rome Conference, Canada has certainly been one of the countries whose propositions have been best received, not only by the developing countries but also by the developed countries which have appreciated the Canadian position as a firm, sensible and realistic one.

Everybody agrees that Canada has an enormous food potential. Moreover, agriculture, not only in developing countries, but also in developed countries, is presently under-going huge difficulties. A great variety of factors explain why the agricultural sector now has to face extremely intricate problems.

Millions of people in several countries of the world not only do not eat their fill, but are positively starving. Only a short time ago, the FAO stated in one of its publications that 10 to 15 million people died directly or indirectly from starvation or malnutrition every year. Several countries had agricultural and food surpluses, possibly not this year, but just a few years ago. Many countries voluntarily slowed down agricultural production, and also destroyed food stocks. Considering the rise in oil costs and its incidence on the increased cost of fertilizers, and considering that political leaders of many countries in the world find it extremely difficult to deal in a positive and definite way with that huge problem, may I say, Mr. Speaker, that the contribution of rich countries in the Rome conference was so scanty that we might regard as somehow shameful the parsimonious commitment of rich countries to those countries to which they are so much indebted.

We all know the advantage taken by several countries, purposely or unvoluntarily, of the huge differences in rates of change and of an all too often unfair trade situation.

Canada had a prominent role in that conference, and our Minister for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen) indeed made a key speech in the Congress House. The Secretary of State for External Affairs stated in his speech and I quote:

We in Canada will not shirk these responsibilities, and are willing to play our part in furthering those common endeavours which bear promise of helping to produce a lasting freedom from want for all mankind—but the endeavours will remain barren if they are not truly common and truly sustained.

A little further on, the minister said:

We are now carefully re-examining the skills and resources that may exist in Canada suitable for assisting the development of new agriculture and fisheries capacity in developing countries to determine practical ways of making them readily available. We therefore intend to have a matching response for countries who set about energetically to