

Government Orders

For a few years now a world-wide consensus has been emerging that these non-governmental organizations, which do remarkable work at little cost, are very efficient. It is in this context, and despite the speeches and commitments it made in front of international forums, that the Canadian government quite unexpectedly cut the funding of close to one half of the country's NGOs and is reducing by 14 per cent the funding of the remainder.

But most of the witnesses heard during the vast consultations led by this government on Canadian foreign policy were saying the opposite. Following these consultations, the Special Joint Committee Reviewing Canada's Foreign Policy recommended in November 1994 that public participation be considered a priority for official development assistance.

After rejecting the joint committee's recommendation, the government went so far as to cut this program's funding and seems to want to perpetuate the ambiguous mandate of CIDA, which is becoming increasingly interested in promoting international trade and less interested in accomplishing its main mission: promoting sustainable human development in the poorest nations of the world. Particularly as Quebecers and Canadians are adopting a new world vision of solidarity and sharing rather than building up armed defence.

It should come as no surprise that the Canadian Council for International Co-operation and the Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale represent more than 100 humanitarian agencies. These NGOs depend on the generosity and dedication of thousands of volunteers who donate their time and money to help the poorest and neediest men, women and children on this planet. Development aid must help reinforce co-operation between institutions and Canadian citizens and those in the third world, and the best vehicle to achieve that is the NGOs, whose people become part of the community they are helping.

Are we to conclude that with these new budgetary measures, the government has abandoned this network of solidarity between Canadians and the people of the third world?

Canada's annual budget for National Defence is around \$10 billion; while the budget for development aid is only \$2 billion. We can assume that the defence industry is anxious to keep it that way. However, the Canadian government cannot aid and abet these questionable choices indefinitely. To maintain this kind of gap between military spending and development aid is unacceptable.

If they are not prepared to be generous, the political leaders of this country should at least realize that development aid can be profitable for industrialized countries. In Canada alone, development assistance creates 45,000 jobs, supports 2,000 businesses and provides economic spinoffs for 80 colleges and

universities. Every dollar invested, and it is indeed an investment, directly generates \$6.42 in Canada.

[English]

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak on Bill C-76, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament last February 27.

The finance minister has put forward a ground breaking budget that has struck a delicate balance within fiscal toughness and sensitivity to people.

• (1305)

The response from the Canadian public has been positive. In my home city of Winnipeg our largest daily newspaper, the *Free Press*, carried the headline the day after the budget: "Tough plan boosts buck, raises hopes".

A column in the February 28 edition of the *Montreal Gazette* read: "[The] budget sets the country on a new course, one in which the national role of the federal government must be rethought, renegotiated and rediscovered. It's a good start".

The *Globe and Mail* agreed: "Canadians, and those abroad who wish us well, must hope that this brave beginning—will now be sustained".

What is this brave beginning? It is the mark of a government coming to grips with a cumbersome national debt which threatens to foreclose on the futures of our children and grandchildren. It is the mark of a government committed to ensuring the needy among us from all walks of life continue to receive the assistance they need. It is the mark of a government that recognizes the need to streamline its own operations, eliminating duplication and waste while improving delivery of all services.

How will the government achieve these ends? First, it will realize \$29 billion in savings over three years: \$5 billion in 1995-96, \$10.6 billion in 1996-97 and \$13.3 billion in 1997-98. These measures are necessary to ensure that regardless of the direction financial markets take in coming years, the government will meet its target of reducing the deficit to 3 per cent of the gross domestic product by year 1997-98.

These tough measures have proven the government is serious about reducing spending and doing so only, in contrast to other parties, after an exhaustive review of government programs aimed at identifying priorities and eliminating waste and duplication.

World financial markets reacted favourably by sustaining our AAA credit rating. The importance of this rating must not be underestimated. Had it fallen, interest rates could have risen and the interest Canada would have been required to pay on its debt would have increased dramatically.