

*Official Development Aid*

I want to see this level established by law in order to remove it from the vagaries and uncertainties of the budgetary process. The development needs of the world are too great for them to be subjected to the different political and financial priorities of our Governments. When we change Government, we naturally change priorities. Canadians, and the world in general, must recognize that this is a fundamental priority which should not be subjected to that kind of whim or change. It should not be possible to change our goals in this respect without the matter even coming before Parliament in the form of a Bill.

Parliament already recognizes that there are certain areas which need this kind of protection. We have legislation establishing formulae for such things as family allowances, old age security, established programs funding, and equalization payments. As a matter of fact, the Government just finished announcing closure on a Bill to change the formula for Established Programs Financing. We do not like to see some of the changes of the Government, but at least it must come before Parliament when it wants to make a change. That important principle should also be incorporated into our entire foreign aid program.

The need for such a principle in our foreign aid program or development assistance program can be seen by looking at the history of the way in which we have dealt with the entire .7 per cent program. The .7 per cent of the Gross National Product goal for official development assistance was first accepted by the Canadian Government in 1970, following the recommendation in the Pearson report which was done for the United Nations. That report recommended that each aid giver should increase commitments of official development assistance to the level necessary for net disbursements, to reach .7 per cent of the GNP by 1975 or shortly thereafter. It also indicated that in no case should it be later than 1980. It is worth repeating that the report recommended 1975 as the target date and that it should be no later than 1980. We accepted this somewhat like a reluctant bridegroom in 1970, but we did not set any timetable for it. In 1980, we said we would make our best effort to reach the .7 per cent goal by 1990. That promise was repeated in 1983 by the Liberal Government. In the 1984 election campaign, the goal was endorsed by all three political Parties.

At that time the Canadian Council for International Cooperation asked candidates of all three Parties in 135 different ridings whether they supported increased, untied development assistance. The background material sent out by the Council explained the .7 per cent target. It is very instructive to look at the results of the survey, in that 91 per cent of the candidates who responded were elected to the House of Commons in the 1984 election. Of the 91 elected, 63 were Conservatives, 12 were Liberals and 16 were New Democrats. Of this total from all three Parties, 81 said that they supported increased aid; 81 out of 91 respondents supported increased aid, five were negative, and five were uncertain. This indicates a very high

level of political support for the principle of increased aid or increased developmental assistance.

When the new Government was sworn into office in September, 1984, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) went to New York and appeared before the 39th General Assembly of the United Nations. At that time he made a very good speech, from which I should like to quote. He said:

Our new Government intends to maintain Canada's commitment to reaching .7 per cent of the GNP by 1990 in Official Development Assistance.

That was the commitment which the Secretary of State for External Affairs made on behalf of Canadians to the people of the world at the United Nations in September, 1984. That was after the new Government was elected and all its promises were shiny and bright; some people thought that the Government might even keep them.

Then came November and the financial statement introduced by the Government in which the .7 per cent goal for ODA was postponed from 1990 to 1995. Further, in the February Budget of this year, it was postponed to the 21st century. The budget speech indicated that in the Government's perception the economy had performed better than expected. It said that the economy was doing well. Despite that, it cut back on the timetable for reaching the goal of .7 per cent of GNP for official development assistance.

Also the Secretary of State said:

Despite serious economic problems at home, we shall not turn our backs on the world's disadvantaged peoples.

In 1986 the Government said that the economy had improved better than expected, but it turned its back and postponed the goal once again.

In the past year Canadian attitudes toward development assistance and aid generally have been documented by Decima Research in a project commissioned by the Canadian Emergency Co-ordinator for African Aid. The results were made available in a little booklet entitled "How Much Aid?", which I urge all Hon. Members to read. It is available from CIDA. Some of the more interesting conclusions in the survey show that a growing percentage of young people want Canada to become a world leader in providing aid rather than being eleventh out of 21 OECD countries.

Young people particularly do not want Canada to be a mediocre follower. They want to see Canada as a leader which takes seriously the problems of world hunger and world underdevelopment. Despite a general desire to restrain Government spending, the survey indicated that 74 per cent of Canadians opposed cutting back on foreign aid. That is exactly what was done when the Government postponed the timetable for increasing aid to the .7 per cent goal.

Also Decima found that 39 per cent of the people interviewed thought that poverty and hunger were the most serious issues facing the world. This was compared with 24 per cent who named the arms race and 22 per cent who named economic problems. A majority of people, whatever they chose