

place—some would even say a form of genocide in years gone—on the part of the Ethiopians against the people in that area in their so-called resettlement efforts. The Minister, however, is assuring us today. She says she is hopeful that this will not take place in future resettlement patterns, and I am hopeful as well. But we are confronted by a serious question as to whether these resettlement programs can be really said to be only a matter of trying to deal with the matter of bringing the people to the food and away from the drought areas, or whether also there are certain other factors in place that involve military and other political concerns on the part of the Ethiopian Government.

What is the Minister and the Department of External Affairs going to do about these problems? Have we in the West, the more affluent countries with much wealth and power, really done enough in advance? Canada has such great abilities in transportation. Have we in the past tried to ensure better transportation systems? Is there anything we could have done about it? That is a very important question in light of the danger of starvation and the tragedy of resettlement which is at hand.

• (1200)

What are we doing to monitor the human rights situation of these people? The Minister says that there is a voluntary resettlement program. How voluntary can a resettlement program really be when army trucks drive up to a community and load people up telling them that they are going south or they will starve, that there will be no food coming in? How voluntary is such a resettlement program? How much choice do they have? That is another question we must ask ourselves searchingly.

Can Canada, with all of its ability in the field of helping out, not use some of its influence to monitor the human rights of those people? What program do we have in place to monitor human rights?

There is an underlying question. What is the Department of External Affairs doing in terms of diplomacy to try to bring the world together. We can bring food together in such a wonderful way, but what are we doing to bring the world together through the United Nations or other ways to solve quickly the tragic war that is taking place in Ethiopia? Are we showing the same kind of energetic leadership as we are showing in the field of humanitarian concern to try to bring about a solution to this tragedy in Ethiopia? Can nations as powerful as the United States, the Soviet Union, Canada, France, Britain, China and India not bring a quick solution to the suffering that is caused in large measure by the tragic problems which exist as a result of the guerrilla war and the constant conflict? Can we not step in more energetically?

These are the kinds of questions which I think Canadians would want to address to the Minister. In appreciation for her report and in thanksgiving for the things that are being done,

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we yet have to ask these questions searchingly. We hope to hear from her further in response.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of my colleagues, the Member for Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands (Mr. Manly) and the Member for Winnipeg—Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie), I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the New Democratic Party to respond to the Minister's statement.

With respect to the specifics of the latter, I would like to start by saying that we on this side of the House are genuinely concerned by the prospect that millions of Ethiopians are again facing starvation. Canadians must respond. The question is how.

[Translation]

When we try to fight famine in Ethiopia, we must realize that famine and the political situation are very closely linked. Granted, drought and gradual desertification are the main causes, but it is also true that the victims of these natural disasters are too often manipulated and used as bait both by the Government and the rebels who are locked in a struggle to control the country. We, and in fact all Canadians find this state of affairs abhorrent.

Hunger knows no politics, and we cannot let food be used as an instrument to control people. The Canadian Government and the international community must state clearly to the two forces who are locked in confrontation that Ethiopians who are dying of hunger must not be used as hostages.

[English]

Canadians believe that the larger and more serious problems of hunger and starvation cannot be ignored and must be addressed. In this respect Canadian aid programs need to consider two interrelated problems; what can be done to alleviate the critical hunger crisis facing Ethiopia today, and what can we do to alleviate the longer-term problems at the root of the current crisis?

Insofar as the immediate crisis is concerned, we believe that Canada must continue its emergency food and medical relief efforts in order to avoid another tragedy like the one we witnessed in 1984-85. I am sure everyone in this House would share that sentiment. Where the problems arise, however, is in ensuring that our humanitarian aid reaches those most in need rather than being used for political or military purposes.

I would have hoped that the Minister would have had more concrete measures to report in this regard. In particular, she should have outlined to this House and to the Canadian people what action the Canadian Government is prepared to undertake to ensure that Canadian aid, indeed, all humanitarian aid is guaranteed free and unhindered access to the needy in all parts of Ethiopia; that relief convoys are clearly identifiable as such and that verification procedures are implemented to ensure that such convoys are not used for military purposes; that food assistance and logistical support are not used directly