

Aid to East Pakistan Refugees

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE****FINANCE, TRADE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

Seventeenth report of Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs, in the two official languages.—Mr. Clermont.

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Sixth report on Standing Committee on Agriculture—Mr. Beer.

INDIAN AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Second and third reports of Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development—Mr. Watson.

NATIONAL RESOURCES AND PUBLIC WORKS

Sixth report of Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works—Mr. Hopkins.

[Later:]

[Translation]

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Third report of Standing Committee on Regional Development, in the two official languages—Mr. Bécharé.

[Editor's Note: For text of above reports, see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

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[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**TABLING OF JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ ON VISIT OF PRIME MINISTER TO SOVIET UNION**

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I should like to table copies in English and French of the joint communiqué on the visit to the Soviet Union of the Prime Minister of Canada.

STATEMENT ON AID TO REFUGEES FROM EAST PAKISTAN

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement I promised to make the other day about aid to the refugees from Pakistan now in India.

During the past several days a number of questions have been raised with regard to the nature of the government's response to requests from the government of India and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for assistance in providing relief for refugees from East Pakistan. The House will recall that on May 18 the Secretary General of the United Nations issued an appeal calling for urgent, humanitarian assistance to relieve the plight of these refugees and sought the co-operation of governments and private organizations in a

[Mr. Speaker.]

co-ordinated effort through the United Nations to alleviate their suffering.

The government accepts without hesitation that the financial burden of providing relief cannot be borne by India alone. To help meet the urgent human needs in West Bengal and other border states, the government is providing \$2 million in relief supplies including food-stuffs, medicines, medical supplies and cash contributions. This \$2 million is a supplementary contribution to the international emergency relief appropriation and will not affect the bilateral development assistance program for India.

It is most important that relief be provided in as effectively co-ordinated a manner as is possible. We are consulting closely with the United Nations in order to ensure that Canada's contribution will complement the contributions of other governmental and private donors who have indicated their willingness to contribute.

The longer-term needs arising out of the presence of the refugees in India are not yet known. This contribution is designed to help meet the immediate needs of the situation.

The government shares with members on all sides of the House and Canadians generally the urgent wish to help bring relief to the suffering in East Pakistan. Adequate funds, needed supplies, means of transportation and the right kind of experts are all available. We are continuing, through the World Bank and other international organizations, to seek a way to deal with the problem. Our High Commissioner in Islamabad is urging upon the government of Pakistan the need to admit relief supplies under proper international supervision and control. I regret that I cannot at this time report any significant progress.

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, we have been asking the minister to make a statement of this kind, and I would be less than courteous if I did not say we thank him for it. I can also say that we approve of what has been announced today. We are glad that something has been done and would have welcomed it sooner. I am in no position to judge as to the adequacy of the amount of \$2 million and how it relates to the magnitude of the problem which exists in that troubled part of the world.

I agree with the minister that the government of India cannot, of course, be expected to bear alone the high cost of meeting the problem which has been forced upon it across its frontiers. This is a very difficult situation. Surely we have reached a stage of civilization where the victims of a war, which is not an international conflict but is designated as a civil war, should not be insulated from the kind of humanitarian help which people outside that country seek to provide. It is obvious there has been terrible suffering in this area and I am sure this contribution is just one step along the road toward offering the kind of assistance needed for the restoration of the many people suffering in that land.

I note that the minister's statement concluded on a note of sadness. He indicated that no significant progress has been made in urging upon the government of Pakistan the need to admit relief supplies under proper interna-