

*Government Orders*

I would ask the government to give us an informal call in the future so that we have a fair chance to prepare ourselves. After all, if we cannot have serious, well prepared debates in Parliament, Canadians will not be getting the service they deserve.

Getting to the issue at hand, Bill C-47, the Reform Party will be supporting the bill. It modernizes the Department of Foreign Affairs. Although Bill C-47 will not bring about major changes in substance to the way the Department of Foreign Affairs is operated, it shows an evolution of the department to reflect the needs and values of Canadians in the 1990s.

I would like to highlight what I think Canadians expect from the Department of Foreign Affairs. Many people do not even realize it is of much importance to them. My constituents will ask why we are spending so much time working on that committee and in that area. I could ask them what they watch in the newscast at night, what their jobs are or what many of their jobs are related to. In my constituency we have a large petrochemical industry, almost 90 per cent of which goes to foreign areas. We have agriculture, a great deal of which goes to the United States and other places. When those matters are mentioned they realize the importance of foreign affairs in their everyday life.

• (1555)

As a result we have hopefully encouraged more interest in foreign affairs. At least now I am asked on occasion: "What is happening in foreign affairs?" The modernization the government is undergoing in Bill C-47 provides an opportunity to highlight the directions in which we think foreign affairs should go as the people of Canada are telling us from a grassroots level.

Canadians want to think of us as a middle power, as being in a middle power position. They want to be proud of Canada. In many cases we are a bit laid back when it comes to talking about how great our country really is. Only when they travel outside the country and talk to others about Canada do they realize what sort of country we have and what sort of profile we have. We need to use that profile to develop a far thinking foreign affairs policy to help us utilize not only opinions from outside but what we have going for us on the inside.

In yesterday's statement I was disappointed in not seeing emphasis being put on the use of more of our multicultural benefits, our people who are trained, who know, who have relatives and understand other countries. I was also disappointed that we did not make more use of our foreign students and Canadians we send to universities around the world. They are a great asset we do not keep track of and we do not utilize.

I hear on the streets that CIDA needs to become more accountable. Certainly people want a transparent agency. They

are not prepared to hear about the terrible mistakes made in that agency or about the ridiculous projects that are funded such as the underwater breeding of water buffalo in Thailand. They do not particularly want to fund projects unless they see some value to them for the people they are trying to help.

There has to be accountability. There has to be a reporting mechanism to Parliament. There has to be a greater utilization of NGOs in that whole area. One of my colleagues will be talking about that later. We certainly need to target what we have to do. We cannot do everything for everybody, and we recognize that.

In looking at the bill, we should be concerned and asking questions about administration from the top. We should be asking if the minister really needs under-secretaries. Do we really need the deputy positions? At this point in our financial crisis we need to be asking: Should we not be cutting from the top instead of doing it the easy way by cutting from the bottom? Often we cut from the bottom up instead of from the top down. We should emphasize to the minister that we want it to be different in the Department of Foreign Affairs. We should be examining under-secretary and deputy positions long before we talk about cutting people in the field.

As far as world organization is concerned, I agree with the hon. member opposite who said that our foreign service is doing an excellent job. I have had the opportunity to visit a number of our foreign consulates and will continue to visit them. We have some great leadership out there and people who are doing the job for us. I will come back to that point in a minute. The world is now divided into three units. It consists of the EU, developing and working together, becoming a very important economic, political and in some cases military unit.

• (1600)

The second unit is the Asia-Pacific region. It started out with one tiger, then two. Now there are seven tigers that are really moving forward in the world. We must recognize that and learn how to deal with them.

The third unit is the Americas, which have been ignored by us, with the exception of the U.S., for a long time. Now we are starting to look at these countries, at Mexico and Central and South America. They become the third major unit of the world with which we will be dealing.

It is important that we put into place our role in the Americas. It is important that we become a leader. When talking to people in some countries, particularly in South America, they say: "We want Canada to be our mediator, to be between us and the elephant. You are used to sleeping beside that elephant and dealing with it. We want you to take a leadership role in helping us to know how to deal with the U.S." They are looking for us to