

Area Program Summaries

I hope that the government will give serious consideration to expanding the role of the committee, to expanding its terms of reference, to providing us with wider powers in terms of subpoenaing witnesses, and let parliament itself take a serious and deep look at the subject of foreign aid, because I think that in that committee there is substantial agreement among all members, no matter of what political persuasion they may be, that they want to do a better job in terms of foreign aid. I think this is not the time for the government to be partisan on the subject. Good will in that committee can go a long way in helping our government do a good job abroad.

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg South Centre): Madam Speaker, I fully support the motion presented by the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro). It is long overdue. We certainly need complete disclosure of all CIDA documents.

There has been a new CIDA committee established to deal with CIDA and its programs, but unless we have all the documentation and all the evidence in regard to how CIDA operates, there is no way in which we could do a complete job. The terms of reference establishing this committee are a farce. They are nothing else but a motherhood motion, and just another cover up by the government which is most reluctant to allow a complete and thorough investigation into the operations of CIDA. I have presented some evidence to the Auditor General who is looking into some of the matters for me. If we are going to be blocked as we were in the last committee meetings, I would call on the Auditor General to do more investigations into CIDA operations.

● (1740)

I should like to refer to an article which was written a number of months ago in regard to CIDA. The headline reads "Spend, spend" (it's your tax money) How CIDA Squanders Cash on Bungled Overseas Aid":

The Canadian International Development Agency is rushing to spend \$117 million within the next few weeks in an effort to impress treasury board officials.

Lagging disbursements in the bilateral branch of CIDA are causing concern because they shortfall the treasury board's \$497.95 million limit set for 1974-75 spending.

CIDA apparently feels it must spend the leftover \$117 million in order to strengthen its bargaining position when the treasury considers the agency's 1975-76 cash allocation.

This effort tends to bear out one of the main contentions of CIDA dissidents—that the chief emphasis in the agency is placed on producing figures to support an impression that Canada is in the vanguard of nations providing development assistance.

The purpose is to meet the target of the World Bank's commission on international development once headed by the late prime minister Pearson.

The target was that, by 1975, official aid should reach 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of donor countries.

In fact, the Canadian government has never set a specific date for achieving this objective. It remains a CIDA preoccupation without official sanction.

Commenting on the CIDA operation, Madam Speaker, the article says:

"Your career in CIDA depends on how you spend", a former agency official said. "You are constantly being hammered over the head and told 'Spend, spend'."

[Mr. Leggatt.]

That is enough reason right there for our looking at all the documents in dealing with the operations of CIDA. That is the least we can do for Canadian taxpayers. We should not suppress these kinds of goings-on in CIDA.

The article continues:

"It's not how well you spend your money, but quantitatively. Can you spend the budget allocated to you? That's what counts."

A second official said: "The whole criteria here is spend. Anyone who says it isn't doesn't know the facts."

Especially, there is CIDA's president, Paul Gerin-Lajoie, a deputy minister unlike the others, who has his own firm ideas about running CIDA.

When Gerin-Lajoie refused last May to let the Commons external affairs committee see a management consultant's report on CIDA's high personnel turnover, he was assured that the MPs would henceforward take a much greater interest in the aid agency's affairs than in the past.

The Conservative external affairs critic, Claude Wagner, said the refusal amounted to contempt of the House.

It is amazing how little information we have been able to obtain from Mr. Gerin-Lajoie in the committee meetings. As one newsman stated, the opposition did not even lay a glove on him. That is a disgrace. We cannot lay a glove on him because we cannot obtain the information. It is an exercise in futility sitting in those committee meetings. We had to hammer away at the government in the committee and raise motion after motion, and finally it condescended to allow us to establish this new CIDA committee, but with our hands tied due to very weak terms of reference.

I should like to give further comments on why there has to be complete disclosure of all these documents from an article which points out the following:

CIDA's critics do not argue with the use of even more money to send wheat to drought-stricken areas, to vaccinate cattle, to develop agriculture and commercial fishing, to build badly needed bridges, power dams and irrigation systems.

But many of CIDA's country-to-country projects have been arousing interest.

The article goes on to give as an example:

A machine which weighs grain and automatically fills and sews up bags, was delivered to Calcutta, India, about a year ago at a cost of \$300,000.

Fortunately, it has not been installed for use since labour-saving devices have sometimes provoked riots in Calcutta, a city with massive unemployment.

What happened to this \$300,000 machine? Has it been brought back to Canada, or is it sitting there rotting? We are entitled to have this information.

The article goes on:

But CIDA recently had tenders out for a second and more advanced machine of the same kind, estimated to cost \$500,000.

So there has been \$800,000 put out on two machines, and we are not even sure if they are operating.

The article continues:

In Senegal, where labour is similarly cheap and plentiful, the polytechnical school at Thies is equipped with automatic dishwashers, according to CIDA employees. Also a ham slicer, a curiosity in this Moslem land where dietary rules forbid the eating of the flesh of swine.

This would certainly indicate that there is great mismanagement in the CIDA operation. I should like to point out that the only way we were able to obtain any sound