

Introduction

"The African famine made a community of the world in 1985, a historic fact in itself," wrote the Toronto Globe and Mail in a New Year's editorial. Somehow, the tragedy and horror of the famine had reached out beyond established structures, official channels and aid programs. This thought was vividly expressed by rock star Bob Geldof when asked in an interview whether "charity should begin at home". He replied: "What are you talking about? This is our home. Earth is it." Gerry Barr of the United Steelworkers believes: "We have an explosively sensitized population, for whom a great many windows have been shot open. . . It has been a shocking, exciting and bridging experience, and it is something that must be preserved at almost any cost."

The response to the African crisis around the world was immediate and unprecedented. In Canada, nearly one million people gave an average of \$60 each to help save 30 million Africans from starvation. Forum Africa sought to build on this generosity and global spirit in ways that the newly involved public could influence national policies for the future. Forum Africa began as a request of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence for increased dialogue on Canadian aid. As part of his second mandate, the Canadian Emergency Coordinator/African Famine, the Honourable David MacDonald, undertook a nation-wide series of public meetings designed to encourage Canadians:

- to keep informed about the current situation;
- to discuss long-term solutions to help Africans rebuild agricultural and food self sufficiency; and
- to become actively involved in support of the African people through community projects.