

Government Orders

any useful lessons here for Canada. Canada is a federation. Don't you think that a very bureaucratic and centralized system within a federation will necessarily smother national or even regional aspirations?

• (1650)

Mr. Langdon: Mr. Speaker, I think it is very difficult to consider these questions in the context of a debate on this bank. As I said in my remarks, the important thing is to avoid a Stalinist bureaucracy. There would be a number of issues to be raised if we were to refer to our own country, but it cannot be said that we have a Stalinist democracy. We do have a bureaucracy, of course, and I would not like to see an overly centralizing bureaucracy here in this country. Still, and I should think the hon. member would agree with me, we cannot say that we in Canada have a Stalinist bureaucracy, even with this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Shefford, for questions and comments.

Mr. Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the hon. member for his speech because I know he is familiar with the subject. But I would ask him whether he might not fear that Canada's participation in this European bank could be detrimental to the international assistance we have given in the past to other world nations in dire need. What I mean, is that a number of countries now receiving Canadian assistance—which is unfortunately too limited and has been declining over the years—may now be concerned that the Canadian participation might be taken from the same appropriations. Therefore, countries which until today have traditionally relied on Canadian aid for their own development may be wondering whether, as a result of the liberation of Eastern Europe, the funds which used to be earmarked for Africa and other Third World nations will be redirected towards Eastern Europe, often for commercial or political motives, to the detriment of the poorest countries of the world. While examining the bill, did the hon. member get the assurance that this will not happen? I realize he cannot speak for the government and that government members have precious little to say about this today, but I would like to know whether the hon. member shares my concern.

Mr. Langdon: Mr. Speaker, I hope there is no legitimate fear on that score. The question was raised in

committee. It is a crucial issue and no one can predict what the government decision will be. For instance, it cannot be said that, after participating in this bank, the government will continue to be as generous as it has been so far with developing countries.

But I think this is an important bank. Since Canadian government assistance does not rank among the best, I do not think we ought to fear that Canada's participation in this bank might lead to a situation likely to create problems for developing countries.

[English]

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to have an opportunity here for the remaining five or six minutes to participate in this particular debate. I have to say that having spent the afternoon here in the House of Commons, I am not feeling in a particularly generous mood, nor do I feel very much of the Christmas spirit but I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you can identify with that feeling.

What we are involved in here is something that has certainly caught the entire world's attention. I can recall not so very long ago visiting the city of Berlin and looking at the wall. I can remember standing on the free side of that wall—if I can describe it that way—beside a beautiful German building, looking at this absolutely horrendous, ugly piece of construction that separated me from a couple of young soldiers just a few feet away sitting in a tower on the eastern side of that wall.

I can recall at that moment my feelings of anger and frustration at dealing with a situation that was absolutely impossible. I thought at that moment of the words of John F. Kennedy who stood there as well and spoke of the horrors of the wall and what it meant to the people of Europe and, in particular, the people of Germany.

Not long after standing beside that wall, I took the opportunity to walk through Check Point Charlie and go into the eastern part of Germany and experienced the absolute culture shock that anybody who has crossed the wall can identify with.

Here we were in western Berlin in a city that was so vibrant, so alive, an obvious tremendous economy, an air of excitement. Whether that was at three in the morning or three in the afternoon it was a city that was so much alive. You could feel the dynamics that were working