

*Routine Proceedings*

I am very pleased that the International Red Cross movement will be hosting such a conference in Solferino with hundreds of youths gathering there from all over the world. I understand our Canadian students will be exchanging visits with African students, Italian students, and others. I know of no better organization than the Red Cross to develop "international students". Our students become international students through this type of movement.

Through two World Wars the Red Cross has operated at risk to its members to alleviate the suffering that results from conflict between countries and within the boundaries of any given country. It has transcended location, race, religion, culture, and language. It has transcended all those factors that create strife, and has succeeded with continuing aid from different countries.

What Surgeon Major George Sterling Ryerson had in mind when he first founded the Canadian Red Cross during the Northwest rebellion in 1885, has blossomed into a movement that involves every single one of us Canadians, man, woman and child. On a daily basis we hear of wars and civil strife in every part of our world, and then we hear of the Red Cross efforts. As much as possible it gives us some comfort that the suffering and pain is not ignored. If the Red Cross is active, some of the pain and suffering will be dealt with in an effective and compassionate manner.

When the bombing in Lebanon escalated, CIDA worked in conjunction with the Red Cross to distribute food, clothing, and medical aid to the people suffering from the increased fighting. On this side of the House, we urged for more help. We asked that more assistance be given to those people who had fled Beirut for neighbouring countries, because the Red Cross cannot do it alone. It needs international help.

On this side of the House, we are disappointed that there will not be an increase in moneys that we can offer the Red Cross to continue its effort. We are disappointed, as are all Canadians, that the Canadian commitment to humanitarian aid is not as strong as we had hoped. I know that this is no fault of the Minister, because I know that she would like to see the funding go up to .7 of GNP instead of the .43 announced in the Budget. I think we should remind ourselves that poverty and hunger breed anger and hostility, which eventually leads to conflicts and wars. By making an investment now to prevent hunger and poverty we save ourselves billions of dollars and we save this planet billions of dollars.

• (1120)

I would ask the Minister, as a gesture to the important work carried out by this organization, to rescind the cuts that were imposed on CIDA in the last Budget. This would be a gesture that would truly celebrate the 125 years that the Red Cross has been in existence.

**Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands):** Mr. Speaker, let me begin by commending the world organization of the Red Cross on its 125th anniversary. This organization does excellent work both within Canada and overseas to alleviate suffering. It responds to real human needs in the event of natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes, but also carries out the dangerous work in war zones. The work is not only dangerous, it is dirty and depressing.

I had the opportunity to see the commendable work the Red Cross does in Africa under very difficult circumstances.

When I arrived on Parliament Hill this morning and saw the Red Cross flag, flanked by Canadian flags, I remembered the Red Cross flags that I saw in Africa. They were a symbol of hope and a symbol of safety.

I think Canadians should take pride in the kind of contributions we have made to the Red Cross in its efforts to provide medical supplies, clothing and shelter in situations of war and natural disasters.

One aspect of Red Cross work that is not so well known is its work with refugees and prisoners of war. The International Committee of the Red Cross is one of the sole agencies that monitors the treatment of prisoners of war. When I was in Africa I went to a prisoner of war camp with a Red Cross representative, where 7,000 young men were harboured during the last five to seven years. The International Committee of the Red Cross was attempting to repatriate them to their homeland.

It is those kinds of workers to whom we pay tribute today on this 125th anniversary. The same man with whom I visited the prisoner of war camp had just returned from similar work with refugees in El Salvador. He was subjected to bombardment and intimidation by the Government of El Salvador, but that did not stop him because people like him are committed to doing the real work that must be done in situations of war. It is those people who try to alleviate the suffering in those situations to which our geopolitical position has contributed.