

Supply—External Affairs

the question of external aid. I know that many things have to be done to improve the living standard of the developing countries. Food aid is one thing, improved agricultural methods are another, educational aid is another, and improved trade is still another. But I have pointed out on a number of occasions that the gross national product of many of these countries is simply not keeping up with the growth of their population, and this is one aspect of the problem of developing countries which should be studied and considered.

This subject was debated earlier in this session. I presented a resolution, which was debated in the house on December 13, 1967, urging the Canadian government to improve family planning assistance in its external aid program. I do not wish at this time to go over all the arguments and statistics which I advanced then. I have raised the matter several times during the question period. However, I never seem to get any answer from the minister and I hope that before we finish these supplementary estimates I will get some answer.

I know that requests have been made to the external aid office. I know a request was made by the international planned parenthood federation for a donation from Canada to carry on the work they are doing in this field. The United States, the United Kingdom, and Sweden, to mention just three countries, are giving such assistance to the I.P.P.F., and the United States through its foreign aid program is also giving direct assistance in this connection. In view of the fact that these requests have been made I should like to know what is the attitude of the government. On January 22 I asked the minister this question following the visit to Ottawa of the minister of health and family planning of India:

During the visit to Ottawa last week of the minister of health and family planning of India did he make a request, formally or informally, for a Canadian contribution to India's population control program?

The minister replied:

Mr. Speaker, the minister from India visited the external aid officials. I have not had a report from them but when I get it I shall be glad to discuss it with my hon. friend.

I am always happy to have a discussion with the minister because he is a very pleasant and interesting person to talk to, but I would like to hear a statement made in public which would be on the record instead of just

[Mr. Prittie.]

having a private discussion of the topic. In any case, I have not yet had an answer from him.

When the matter was debated in the house the hon. member for Rosedale, the minister's parliamentary secretary, replied on behalf of the government. I did not find the reply very satisfactory. He suggested in two places in his speech that if the government were to engage in this type of program there might be some objection from important religious groups in the country. I fail to see that such an objection would stand up today. We are not talking about abortion. I know that many people in this country are opposed to abortion; certainly the Roman Catholic church is. But we are talking about family planning which I do not believe is any longer a controversial subject in this country. Indeed, we are about to change our own law when we get around to discussing Bill S-22 which has already been passed by the Senate.

● (5:40 p.m.)

I do not believe there would be a great outcry on the part of any substantial part of the population if the government were to follow the lead of the United States, the United Kingdom and other governments. Aid would be given to those countries that want it and have no moral or religious objections to taking it. I refer particularly to India and Pakistan. In the past the minister has shown a great reluctance to discuss the subject. I am sure that within the department some consideration has been given to it and I would like an answer from the minister when he replies to the points raised during this debate.

Mr. Herridge: Mr. Chairman, I do not intend to detain the committee long and I shall be reasonably brief as usual. My views on foreign affairs are fairly well known. I stand for an independent foreign policy for Canada. I have stated that repeatedly in this house. I have also expressed my opposition to Canada remaining in NATO and have done so throughout the years. The same situation holds true with respect to NORAD. I stand for support of the United Nations, for Canada doing what it can in the military sense to support the United Nations and also in respect of external aid.

I have also been strongly opposed, as the minister knows, to the war in Viet Nam, particularly after reading the report of a conference former President Eisenhower had with the governors of the states in the United