

Development Assistance

while asking it to cut back its ability to defend itself in the face of the very problem that is destroying it, which is a military problem.

That would be the result of such an idea as expressed in the motion which is before us. It would bring about tragic results since it would make a demand on Mozambique to cut back its military forces. It seems somewhat inconsistent that our NDP colleagues want to see us do something about these front-line states in order to help them, and then on the other hand suggest that we pass a motion that would cut back by 1 per cent their ability to fight militarily, something which they do in a weakened state as it is. Would the NDP want us to cut back on the aid we give to Nicaragua, or not give it aid? After all, it has to expend its military forces to fight off the American-backed Contras and their terrorist bands. Perhaps the NDP would like to see Nicaragua cut back its military spending by 1 per cent in order to receive our overseas development assistance?

The terms of the motion show the inconsistency of this particular suggestion. We cannot link on the one hand the cutting back of aid or allow these countries to spend their military budgets, while on the other hand increasing aid to them on the other side of the ledger. Some countries could not afford such a program. It would be tragic to impose such a program on them.

The NDP is inconsistent in other ways as well. We have had presented to us by it the idea that Canada should cut back its spending on defence by 1 per cent. I suggest that, too, would be an inconsistent idea, if the NDP is also calling for us to withdraw from NATO. If we were to withdraw from NATO, it seems to me that we would have to spend more on defence rather than less, if we are to maintain our sovereignty. If we are to maintain our sovereignty and our independence by withdrawing from an umbrella organization in which we share the costs, then it seems to me that Canada would be reducing its ability to be effective, unless it increases its military spending.

As a matter of fact, perhaps the NDP realizes that it is not less defence spending that we need but better priorities on what we spend it. Canada requires defence spending if it is to continue its peace-keeping work. Canada requires more defence spending if it intends to play a larger role in the monitoring and the verification of disarmament. This inconsistency to withdraw from NATO and at the same time cut back on defence spending does not seem to make sense.

Another point I would like to make is that we have a long history of NDP ideas which reek of inconsistencies and contradictions. First, we witnessed the proposal to cut back on NATO spending. Then we heard from the Hon. Member for New Westminster—Coquitlam (Ms. Jewett) her support for terrorism and violence. Now we must endure this equally ludicrous motion of the Hon. Member for Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands (Mr. Manly).

• (1440)

I wonder what is next to come from this Party of military strategists!

Mr. Bud Bradley (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, if a Canadian Government implemented the substance of the motion as proposed by the Hon. Member for Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands (Mr. Manly), funds earmarked for defence would be diverted to official foreign development assistance. On the surface no one can, if one assumes the world is perfect, argue against such a well-intentioned objective. I reinforce the fact that I honestly feel that the motion is well-intentioned. However, the world is not perfect. It would appear that the motion and most of the foreign and defence policies of the Hon. Member's Party seem to come from the same naive idealistic base.

I would argue that the support accorded by the NDP for such policies conveniently ignores the historical, current, and future realities governing world affairs. They conveniently deny the existence of Canadian defence and economic priorities which have and will continue to be fashioned in a manner that reflects the fact that Canada exists in an interdependent and imperfect world.

In the real world in which we live, Canada need not apologize to anyone on the level of development assistance provided to other countries. However, up to very recently, June 5 to be precise, this was not quite the case for Canada's defence effort.

From a situation where Canada had firmly established itself as a credible actor on the world stage, through collective defence efforts in World War I, World War II, Korea, and NATO and NORAD in the post-war era, and through a multitude of diplomatic initiatives, many through the United Nations, Canada's international reputation became tarnished because of the defence policies of the previous Government. This is the situation which the present Government is correcting.

For over 16 years Canadian defence policy was underfunded. As a result, equipment in the Canadian Armed Forces is inadequate in quantity and quality. Even when the former Government belatedly decided to embark upon a re-equipment program, it made no long-term commitment for funding. How could the defence planners work in this environment when it can take more than 15 years to implement fully the acquisition of major weapons systems? The previous Government had no sense of vision when it came to defence policy.

On June 5, when the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Beatty) tabled the Government's White Paper, a visionary defence policy was set out. It was based on the realities of the world and Canada's role in it; on the only sound concept for the country, that of collective defence; on the economic abilities of our country; and on the will of all Canadians to defend our democratic way of life.