

Area Program Summaries

mation to make parliament work because, quite simply, that is what he is asking. This is almost entirely a privilege motion asking those of us who have to work in this area to be given a chance to do the job.

This is not the first time the opposition has requested a fairer share of information about the operations of CIDA. Last February my colleague, the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin), spoke in support of a motion moved by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner) which deplored the secrecy that surrounds CIDA. I am sorry to see today that nothing has changed in the government's attitude. The principle at stake, which is the openness of government operations in general and CIDA in particular, is most important. From time immemorial governments have desperately tried to protect themselves from the discovery and criticism of their blunders by throwing a cloak of official secrecy over as wide an area as possible.

The right of parliament and the public to information on foreign aid is absolutely vital and tremendously important if the foreign aid program is to have any continuing public support. At present it is losing support among the public, I am sorry to see, and one of the reasons for that is this continuing government secrecy about its own programs.

CIDA has been the subject of scandal and rumour recently. A number of very expensive programs have been found seriously wanting. The press has reported great sums spent on railways that do not exist and sewer systems that do not work. Beyond that there have been reports of internal dissension, staff turnovers, and serious criticisms by an independent professional body, Price Waterhouse. It was because of these rumours that the opposition called for further disclosures last February. Our party regretted the government's stubborn refusal to provide the necessary information. We will regret it again if the government refuses the reasonable requests of the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich.

The necessity of disclosure has more important dimensions than those of the occasional blunder. It is important now for the country to begin to debate the spirit and purpose of foreign aid as it has developed since the war. But we cannot begin to do that without the necessary information. I said earlier that the government has not changed. Ministers continue to be the same stubborn, arrogant and secretive bunch. But our appreciation of foreign aid itself is changing.

There is a body of literature emerging now which puts the purpose and design of present aid programs into serious doubt and calls out for a very serious and fundamental review. Such a review cannot begin unless we are first able to understand the agency, its tasks and its approach, not only in general but in detail. We should really be calling into question the purpose and design of the foreign aid programs of the entire western industrialized world. What seems more obvious to observers every day is that, whatever may be the intention of these programs as they are now designed, far from helping third world countries to develop to a stage of independence consistent with their national potential, they prevent the third world from developing self-reliant socio-economic societies.

Most of Canadian aid, about 70 per cent, is channelled through CIDA's bilateral division. Aid in this division

ranges from outright grants to loans at slightly less than the going rate. Increasingly this aid takes the form of loans which must be repaid, and increasingly such loans are being used by client countries, with the encouragement of the developing countries, to balance their budgets, in individual cases, a budget which then continues to increase in deficit and tie the developing country increasingly to the aid country.

The value in real purchasing power in terms of manufactured goods of the exports of developing countries has plummeted in the past 20 years until, with respect to commodities like sugar, cotton, coffee, jute and tea, their purchasing value has lost ground drastically. Quite obviously then, increases in the purchases of manufactured goods from developed countries distort local economies drastically, causing physical disaster and social disorder.

Borrowing from the World Bank in order to finance development is conditional upon acceptance of the advice of the IMF, advice which is founded on economic liberalism, the widest possible play for free market forces, and the narrowest play for government intervention which may protect the client country from imports and encourage indigenous substitutes for the products of the western industrialized world.

Acceptance of IMF guidelines encourages a dependence on imports in the client country, but with the continued decrease in the real purchasing power of their exports developing countries go more and more into the hole. Increasingly foreign aid is used and encouraged as a balancer to make up the difference in the cost of imports and the price received for exports. Therefore foreign aid is not fostering self-reliant development but just the opposite; it encourages increased dependence by cushioning its immediate effects on the local economy.

The hon. member for Charlevoix referred to the new economic order. I think it is probably the most encouraging thing to happen in terms of international aid in a very long time. I am disappointed from time to time, when I attend international conferences, to listen to the rhetoric of the third world representatives who blame so many of their problems on an imperialist system. In my view, some of that information may be right, but they do no service whatsoever to their own cause in continuing to belabour that argument because the developing world is ready to help and enter into serious negotiation in terms of the new economic order. I suggest that the third world representatives whom I meet at these conferences tend to be their own worst enemies. If they would forget about the shibboleths of the past and get on to the future in terms of the renegotiation of prices of world products, we would make significant gains in terms of helping third world countries.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Leggatt: I want to end by agreeing with my colleague, the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich, in what he had to say about the operations of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence. Those of us who have to struggle on that committee with almost no time to deal with meaningful questions, and to deal with a government which may refuse this motion—I hope it will accept it—cannot do a job with the kind of limited facilities that are available to that committee.