

International Economic Conference

except, I believe, it would be a good thing for Canada to maintain its role, a leading role in this dialogue, I hope.

● (1530)

On the question of special action, the hon. member has raised some questions about Canada's commitment. As did most G8 countries at the conference, we have reaffirmed our decision to reach the 0.7 per cent target, and we also, as I recollect, undertook an annual increase in our aid budget. Hon. members should bear in mind that last year and in the current year we have increased the aid budget by more than \$100 million, so that the budget now is in excess of \$1,100 million. We will strive to maintain that in volume terms, and, as a matter of fact, by reaffirming our decision to reach the objective we will attempt, obviously, to reverse any further declines.

On the question of aid flows I hope it will not be overlooked that in the case of Japan, for example, that country undertook to double its aid flows in the next five years. The United States undertook to increase its aid flows substantially over the next several years. The two commitments from these two industrial powers represent a transfer of resources in the billions of dollars. These are all results of the Conference on International Economic Co-operation. I feel, therefore, that the industrialized countries, if their rather enormous efforts at the conference are not recognized, will be discouraged from making further additional efforts, and that is why I think it rather unfortunate that more recognition was not given in our communique to efforts that have been made by the western countries in the field of aid flows in the sense that it was somewhat revolutionary when we consider the state of play about three or four months ago.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the minister who has already given his best guess as to where the dialogue will go from here and how it will be conducted. I would like to ask the minister whether he would take some opportunity, if it is going to be his continued responsibility, to outline to parliament on some occasion this summer just what Canada's global approach to this problem of international disparity is, bearing in mind that direct aid is important and bearing in mind that, in my judgment, the expectations of the developing countries from commodity agreements are vastly inflated. They are likely to lead to considerable disappointment because I cannot imagine those agreements having the effect that any such countries might expect.

Bearing in mind also that so much of what transpires in the country depends on social structures and many other aspects, I would like to ask the minister whether it is not possible, even in our own country, to move from rhetoric to something more concrete. I do not minimize the difficulties of this because most of us realize the difficulty in dealing satisfactorily with regional disparity in our own country, but perhaps the minister could respond in this way. Are we not engaged to a very considerable extent in rhetoric in this international area? Admittedly some countries are paying large sums of money

[Mr. MacEachen.]

and doing something. Are we not engaged mostly in rhetoric and very little in concrete programs that would give some hope of substantially reducing international disparity?

Mr. MacEachen: I agree that there has been a great deal of rhetoric in the field of international development. One of the advantages of this restricted but representative forum of 27 nations is that rhetoric has been considerably reduced, although there is still some. All through CIEC we have not heard much about apartheid or these other important political questions that have always come up in the discussion of north-south relations.

The hon. member asked when we will get down to concrete cases. I will name just a certain number of concrete situations or concrete results. There was a commitment on the part of all participants to support the common fund as a new entity and a key instrument in the field of commodity stabilization. That is concrete. There have been very concrete results in the field of food and agriculture, and there has been a new commitment to a decade of infrastructure in Africa, particularly in the field of transportation. I believe that what CIEC has yielded is a more concrete approach in specific areas than has hitherto been the case. I would agree with the opening comment made by the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield), which in a sense re-echoes the statement made by the foreign minister of France following the conference when he said that CIEC has ended with a positive result and valuable gains have been acquired, such as the common fund, the special action, the African decade of transportation and communication.

Then, he went on to say that the disappointments expressed by some G19 countries have been expressed against unrealistic hopes, or, as the hon. member says, unrealistic expectations. One of the difficulties is that there are unreal expectations. It seems to me that because of the interaction and the negotiating between senior political people from both groups of countries a good deal of rhetoric has been swept aside, but I do not think the job has been finished by any means.

Mr. Sharp: I would like to follow with a question similar to the one asked by the hon. member for Halifax. It is related to two specific proposals that have been before the CIEC conference. It seems to me that in Canada and in many other countries there has been a good deal of what might be termed as unnatural optimism about the possibility of certain proposals being accepted. I want to ask the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) therefore, two questions related to these proposals. The first is related to the question of stabilization and indexation of the export price of commodities. Like the hon. member for Halifax I have been rather skeptical. The question I would like to ask the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) is whether in his view there was any clarification of the implications of these proposals at that time. For example, would the export commodities of Canada be stabilized and indexed if such a system were to be brought into effect?