

Adjournment Debate

Let me first confirm the assurances given a few days ago by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Miss MacDonald) in this House that the over-all budget and aid program for the coming year will be no less in dollar terms than it is at the present. In fact, it will be higher. I am sure that the hon. member will agree that considering the difficult economic circumstances in which we find ourselves today we must exercise the utmost restraint in government spending, and no single program is exempt from restrictions.

However, I believe that the effectiveness of our aid program will not decrease in any way. On the contrary, the current environment will challenge our imagination and may very well lead to a more effective and better quality aid program. It will be our responsibility to ensure that every aid dollar spent does indeed reach its target and achieves its objectives fully, and that is to benefit the people for whom it was intended. I can assure this House that whatever new direction is given to our aid policy, the budgetary restrictions will not prevent us from responding generously to situations of emergency, as demonstrated by our recent pledge to refugees in and from Kampuchea, the emergency assistance extended to Dominica in the Caribbean, and the new food aid program to Bangladesh.

With respect to the non-governmental organizations, the importance the government attaches to them is to increase, not decrease, their activity, as suggested by the hon. member. I am pleased to inform this House that the preparation of the background documentation for the aid policy review process is now well advanced. In the near future consideration of the aid policy will be taken up by a parliamentary body, and there will be ample opportunity for members of this House to make their input to the orientation of the future aid policy. I am sure that the hon. member for New Westminster-Coquitlam will make a very valuable contribution to this effort, and I look forward to her participation.

Miss Jewett: Where is the \$15 million coming from?

Mr. Knowles: That is still no answer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Scott, Victoria-Haliburton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at two o'clock p.m.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.29 p.m.