

Area Program Summaries

would have to speak on the matter, I inquired with CIDA officials as to what exactly CIDA considers an area program, even though I had an inkling on what was being done in that field of the Secretary of State for External Affairs. The answer I received from CIDA officials is that the so-called area program documents are a part of a whole, and I do not think this is a novel thing to the hon. member.

So these area programs are a part of an overall scheme. Every year they have to go through the same process. There are consultations in the receiving country. Governments for instance are consulted, in countries where aid is to be extended. Those governments are asked to state their priorities, their most pressing needs. Reports are sent to Ottawa by our embassies, by officials in CIDA, External Affairs, Trade and Commerce, National Defence or any other body with a foreign representation or contacts in receiving countries. We act on the basis of these reports that we study, along with certain reports from international agencies such as the World Bank, which are sometimes provided on a confidential basis. With all these documents, we are able to produce one program per country. But our troubles are not over when we get to that stage. The officer who works for CIDA on Bank Street receives some information and develops for a given year a certain program for a given country.

Officers at External Affairs, Industry and Commerce and other departments, including National Defence, do exactly the same job. Then, everything that has been done on this subject in each department is submitted to an extremely strict review because, of course, even though the officer concerned may be very knowledgeable about the particular country, he may not have all the data required to make a valid decision and can sometimes become over-enthusiastic if he favours the country involved, and so on.

This first draft of a program for a given country is then submitted to a program review. I shall not take the trouble to quote all the data related to this review, since my hon. colleague can find them in the paper provided by CIDA in April 1975. My hon. colleague will find that this first draft is submitted to the general review of the highest CIDA officers and that it is then examined by the chairman's office. Afterwards, a study of each program is conducted by an interdepartmental committee and the results of all these reviews are submitted to another interdepartmental committee which includes all departments with international involvements before being referred to the cabinet.

Madam Speaker, the papers requested by my hon. colleague are part of a whole; they are but a link in a chain. I believe that it would not necessarily help us to develop our foreign policy to produce such papers because we can find, in a specific paper, which has not been summarized and studied by the various people involved, things that could be detrimental, I think, and as my hon. colleague the former parliamentary secretary suggested, that could be detrimental to the carrying out of our foreign policy. I am firmly convinced of that.

I also consider that when my hon. colleague says that it is frustrating to work on the Committee on External Affairs and National Defence and to have to consider under pressure in a few hours estimates exceeding \$700

[Mr. Lapointe.]

million that it is undoubtedly frustrating for committee members to say that they must be passed in a hurry when sometimes one does not quite know what one is talking about.

However, I think it is not the purpose of the motion nor my purpose here to pass judgment on the system used in the parliamentary committee. My colleague could introduce another motion and we could discuss that subject at another time.

On the other hand, the question raised is of very great importance because we do not always have all the necessary tools to carry out our work conscientiously. I am not suggesting that the tool requested by my hon. colleague is the good one. However, I think we should all together here in this Parliament consider the possibility, and let us take the case we are concerned with at the moment, namely the question of the Committee on External Affairs and National Defence, so the political parties will have either a delegate or members of the Committee on External Affairs will be invited as observers to certain inter-departmental meetings where the main orientations of our aid policy are decided. I think that would allow us to pass a much more consistent and much more enlightened judgment on the policies put forward by the government.

I would finally like to point out that the problem raised, as I mentioned earlier, the problem of development assistance is a basic one, especially after the seventh special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations which was held in New York in September. The new economic order has been defined in a very general way.

I think that we must all, as parliamentarians, during this year endeavour to study more specifically the implications of the new international economic order and tackle the task which has been delineated not necessarily for us alone parliamentarians but also for the Canadian people. This task was defined by the president of the Canadian International Development Agency who, at the Vienna Institute, spoke on development and co-operation and concluded his speech as follows:

The establishment of a new social order in which the men of all nations, rich and poor, will shape their common fate as a challenge to the collective conscience of mankind.

From a moral point of view it is no doubt a matter of duty, but it is also a possibility which can become reality.

I hope, Madam Speaker, that we will all endeavour as parliamentarians to make this possibility come true.

[English]

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Madam Speaker, I should like to congratulate the hon. member for Charlevoix (Mr. Lapointe) for trying to defend the indefensible, and doing so quite articulately and spiritedly. There is an old saying among lawyers that when you have a tough case you pound the books, and when you have an impossible case you pound the desk. I heard a lot of desk-pounding from the other side of the House.

● (1730)

I would also like to congratulate the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) for bringing forward this motion. Needless to say, our party supports him 100 per cent in his attempts to bring forward this necessary infor-