

Commonwealth Caribbean

● (1632)

I do not want to spend very much time on this subject.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Peters: That is not to satisfy my colleagues on the other side of the House. It is simply because they may not be able to stay on this subject long enough to kill the motion. That is the reason I will not take too long.

We have been very impressed with the efforts that have been made to relate in a fair and reasonable way the relationship between the Caribbean and Canadian people. There is a warm friendship on both sides. It has been ably demonstrated that, given a reasonable response, very unusual results may flow from that which will be to both our advantage and theirs.

We are all familiar with the lack of support on the government benches with regard to the request from the Turks and Caicos Islands. They petitioned Canadian members of parliament to make some kind of arrangement whereby we would provide them with the industrial development necessary to develop those islands into a resort area. In return, the islands could be used for the benefit of Canadian citizens.

The government pooh-poohed that, saying that we would be accused throughout the world of starting up a colonial empire. When my colleague from Waterloo-Cambridge (Mr. Saltzman) suggested those islands attach themselves to Nova Scotia, there was a great hullabaloo. It was suggested by the Turks and Caicos that they become a protectorate of Canada or a territory. The then secretary of state for external affairs, Mr. Sharp, almost had a fit. He asked what our neighbours would say when we went to the United Nations if we had a protectorate or territory in the Caribbean. He said we would become a colonial power.

That was not the way the people on the islands viewed it. They have a relatively small population, 5,000 or 6,000. Even if you include all the relatives on the islands, there still would not be more than twice that number. These people could easily be covered under our old age pension and other social security programs that we have. In return, they would have allowed Canadians to build hotels and establish seaports. The Canadian dollar would have been used as the exchange. Canada could have sent many processed foods and goods to these islands. They, in turn, could have sent us what they grow on their tropical islands, as well as letting us take advantage of their sun and sand. This was pooh-poohed because the officials in the Department of External Affairs felt it would indicate that we were not as pure in terms of being colonially oriented as we pretend to be.

There would be an advantage on both sides. All arrangements would have to be done in harmony. There could be an equal exchange and we could quite easily arrive at a trade balance that would be nil. By reciprocal buying and selling, there would be equal advantage to both sides.

This is not true at the present time in the Caribbean. In Jamaica, for example, we own the banks as well as the bauxite

[Mr. Peters.]

industry. They look at Canadians in a different light than if we were equal partners in a Commonwealth arrangement.

The hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) has sown a seed that I hope will grow to maturity. I see great advantage for both the Commonwealth Caribbean and for Canada. I can visualize ships travelling between those two areas in the same way that airplanes do, carrying people and produce, with a mutual advantage to both parties. There should not be any roadblocks whether people want to travel to Hawaii or California. That is not the question. This is an opportunity to expand our trade in a mutually acceptable way and to do it with equality. We would be equal trading partners working to our mutual advantage under a harmonious arrangement between Canada and the Caribbean Commonwealth.

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, there was joy in the House of Commons today when we were privileged to hear again the distinguished voice of our colleague, the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie). There was sadness in the House also when we were reminded of the pending departure of that gentleman who has done so much through his years in the House of Commons to raise the sights of Canadians to our international opportunities and responsibilities.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roche: I say to the hon. member for Hillsborough that this House will be the poorer for his departure. If he leaves behind the many aspects of a legacy through the years, the final chapter being his motion this afternoon, this House has been well served indeed.

Unfortunately, I have to tell the hon. member for Hillsborough that he has not been totally successful in raising the viewpoint of Canadians with regard to international opportunities and obligations. There was a perfect demonstration a moment after that gentleman sat down of a Canadian who has not yet had his vision widened commensurate with the responsibilities he holds as a member of parliament.

The hon. member for Burnaby-Seymour (Mr. Raines), in responding to this motion, made a very interesting speech indeed. I say to him with great respect, and indeed friendship, that his speech this afternoon in which he lamented the high cost of domestic travel and deplored the drying up of funds for the domestic student exchange program, was not a speech against the motion of my friend from Hillsborough. It was an indictment of his own government for failing to do the things necessary in our own domestic economy, giving him a sense of frustration and exacerbation respecting travel in our own country. Just because a point he made indicated the government is not to say that the validity of the point made by my hon. friend from Hillsborough is any less.

● (1642)

I have to remind the hon. member for Burnaby-Seymour that only three or four hours ago in this very chamber the