

Another area which the task force studied quite intensively dealt with the subject of food aid. The role of emergency food aid in disasters is one that is not questioned. It is the ongoing role played by food aid that is controversial. However, it should be pointed out that not all countries in the South are dependent on food aid. In fact, there has been some remarkable progress. For example, India suffered a major drought ten years ago. The response in food aid from other nations was immediate and massive, but thousands of Indians starved to death. Two years ago India underwent another severe drought, but because of gains made in agriculture production, India was self-sufficient and able to feed its people from grain grown and stockpiled in India.

● (1730)

The Indian government is joined by the government of Bangladesh in its determination to make food production one of its highest priorities. So it can be seen that self-sufficiency in agricultural production is an attainable goal. It is also the case that people can starve to death, not through lack of food but through lack of money to buy food. We urge that aid be given to the poorest of the poor, to avoid this type of situation arising.

We found in our discussions that food aid had often exacerbated problems faced by newly emerging nations. A dependence on food aid was fostered, sometimes upsetting market balances to the detriment of domestic production, which robs people of their initiative and self-esteem. We determined therefore that food aid from Canada should be used only as a transitional measure to fill the gap which exists between a country's food needs and its food production.

Food aid should be part of a detailed and well integrated food production plan in which food aid would gradually decline and assistance for food production increase.

I feel that this subject is too important to be left to civil servants, who are cautious and careful not to put themselves into positions where they can be criticized. This issue of North-South relations needs to be handled with imagination and verve, qualities not called for in the job descriptions of most bureaucrats.

I think it is time for new blood, and that is why I call for an ongoing mandate for members of Parliament to involve themselves in this topic. As members of the task force, we found our travels greatly beneficial in bringing home the realities of the situations faced in the developing countries. We had a first-hand opportunity to observe the Canadian government's involvement in development and were, therefore, able to suggest practical alternatives to present procedures. Travel is a valuable educational tool and members should be allowed to visit countries where Canada is involved in aid or development projects. Members should be allowed not only to view first-hand what Canadians are doing, but to question and to criticize.

May I ask how much time I have left, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): One minute.

International Relations

Mr. Fretz: I shall conclude by saying it is ironic that the Prime Minister supposedly has such a keen interest in world affairs and the North-South issue when he is unable to resolve the Canadian east-west problem. Apparently he delights in paying world prices for oil to Mexico, OPEC or Venezuela rather than paying 75 per cent of that price to Canadians.

I say it is ironic because he appears to want to solve world problems but cannot successfully deal with domestic problems. There is no doubt that there are real needs in the world. We as Canadians can be proud of our efforts, but more Canadians would be willing to rally behind the Prime Minister for this cause if he showed more sympathy, more concern and more understanding regarding our own problems.

● (1740)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Duclos (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, before speaking to the motion moved by the New Democratic Party, I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the fact that our friends in the official opposition have refused to give up to the House one of their allotted days. I suspect that decision will sadden the thoughtful Progressive Conservatives, and I know some among my friends across the floor who do not suffer from tunnel vision, who are greatly interested in international political issues, and who will be all the more upset because in the past their party made a significant contribution in the definition and the preparation of Canada's foreign policy.

It is unfortunate that they were unable to set aside their purely partisan considerations, if only for one day. This being the second day of the first debate on foreign policy held in the House in many years, it is disappointing to see that the New Democratic Party have deliberately chosen to ignore certain issues which are crucial at this time, such as the North-South dialogue which was so aptly set in its proper perspective yesterday by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan). Similarly, they have chosen to ignore other important questions, including disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, the law of the sea, as well as the situation in Africa and in the Middle East, simply to enable their leader to rehash the same arguments we have already heard in the debate of March 9 last on El Salvador. According to the motion moved by the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker, this House ought to express the continuing concern which hon. members feel over Canada's international relations. It is rather strange that the New Democratic Party should want to concentrate on only one question which, as I just said, was debated at length hardly three months ago, and that they should decide to remain silent on other issues which are even more important to Canada and world peace.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs has just reiterated the policy of the government on El Salvador. As he pointed out, that is a region where traditionally Canada has not been