

There is a great deal at stake as we put together an improved CIDA operation and an enlarged Canadian role in the continuing north-south dialogue. The first priority has got to be on building Canadian public opinion to support CIDA, and to accomplish that CIDA has to do a better job of explaining itself.

● (1750)

[Translation]

Mr. Fernand E. Leblanc (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Roche) raised some questions concerning a statement in the Auditor General's report related to CIDA where it says that certain countries do not honour their commitments. He asked whether Canada will maintain a high level of aid to Indonesia without publicly protesting the violation of human rights in that country where so many political prisoners are being held.

In the light of our experience in the field of development cooperation in the last twenty-five years, it appears clearly, Mr. Speaker, that if there is one thing the under-developed countries are not joking about, it is their own development. With a few exceptions, they are not taking their commitments lightly. They do not come back either on commitments made with their partners or on arrangements made to achieve some projects to straighten out and restore their own economy.

However, it must be recognized that we are speaking here of underdeveloped countries, of poor countries, where shortages of all sorts are the rule rather than the exception, and where planning capacities and management experience are often scarce. By that very fact, we are dealing with countries where our help must be concentrated in a manner and spirit of true cooperation.

I think we all realize that errors in planning and implementation are inevitable and that the beneficiary-country can find itself unable to supply the promised resources for lack of them on the local market or lack of funds. As a result, the work of CIDA is occasionally delayed or made more complex, which is unfortunate but inevitable. As for the report of the Auditor General, I would merely add that we hear much more, and rightly so, of its negative aspects; on the other hand, to get an overall view of the situation, we should remember that the Auditor General mentioned a marked improvement during the fiscal year 1975-76, in the application of measures intended to tighten the financial control and improve the administration.

The problem of the violation of human rights has recently been given more attention in the press. I am convinced that all hon. members are happy to see the renewed interest in that most complex and persistent problem. The attitude of Canada, with regard to the violation of human rights in other countries, has traditionally been based on the conviction that it is easier to influence the internal policy of other countries, and really improve the living conditions of the persons involved, if we proceed slowly, making representations through diplomatic and other official channels, while maintaining good relations with those countries. In the specific case of Indonesia, the

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Canadian government is aware that there are political prisoners in that country; indeed, it brought up the matter at top level meetings, thus voicing the concerns of many Canadians about the problem.

An alternative to our traditional policy would be to denounce publicly, on behalf of the Canadian people, the violations that are brought to our attention. This would cause serious problems. First, such an initiative would bring about resentment and official protests against our interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states. We would then be faced with the law of decreasing efficiency, since Amnesty International and other groups have gathered evidence of serious violations of human rights in over one hundred countries, including most Third World countries. Even worse, it is not very likely that this would improve the situation of those victims of the oppression that are not known internationally, not considering that in certain cases, in some countries, their situation could become even worse. As the Secretary of State for External Affairs pointed out in his statement of last March 3, our policy in that regard will be very flexible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn.

Motion withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock tonight.

At 5.56 p.m. the House took recess.

[English]

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

AUDITOR GENERAL ACT

MEASURE RESPECTING OFFICE OF AUDITOR GENERAL

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-20, respecting the office of the Auditor General of Canada and matters related or incidental thereto, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) has three motions at report stage which would seek to amend Bill C-20, an Act respecting the office of the Auditor General of Canada and matters related or incidental thereto.

As I indicated earlier in the day, I had some concern that the hon. member's amendments were introducing into this statute a new concept of the responsibilities of the Auditor