

CIDA

across the world. According to the minister there is a steady flow of information, if only the dumb people over here were bright enough to put their cups under that spout of wisdom. We heard him on this subject, and how he chastised us for not being inquisitive enough. I noticed, however, that the weakest part of his argument was that part covered by my colleague when he referred to the correspondence between himself and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner). If they cannot find correspondence, I suggest that they have someone in their office look in the files for the period from October 15 to December 13 of 1974. I say to him that if he is so anxious to disseminate wisdom, so eager to spread the gospel of complete perfection in his department, he should present these letters for public scrutiny.

● (1750)

I say also that the minister and his colleagues had their opportunity to show their concern for public and parliamentary enlightenment when the Price Waterhouse report was before the committee. Was there at that time any desire to enlighten members? There was not, Sir; there was suppression, followed by a further flow of funds. What was it for? Presumably, we must wait till some consultant group will produce a report so palatable that it might be allowed to be seen by the public, and perhaps it too will have a glossy cover with a beautiful fisherwoman on it.

I say also that my colleagues have sought, time and time again, to have a specific reference made to the standing committee on the report of CIDA. The minister and his associates said no to that as well. There is no reason why the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence could not undertake a thorough going examination of CIDA, not a limited examination which is cut-off by the guillotine of the estimates presentation. It could be done very simply by having the minister come in with the proper reference.

Some years ago when the former senator, the hon. Paul Martin, was minister, we had referred to the committee the annual report of the minister, and the committee under that reference was able to study in detail and at length these important matters. This is the way for the minister to get the information across to us.

I like the minister's debating style, but no peroration, however clever, can dissipate the clouds that surround the CIDA operation, can diminish the anxiety of the Canadian people that things are not going as well as they should. Has the minister told us why the phenomenal turnover in personnel has been taking place, why that very important division of government has become a regular personnel kaleidoscope? People are constantly spinning out of the department. That, sir, is very serious because, as every single speaker today has demonstrated, the people of Canada and the members of this House are proud of our role and are anxious to preserve our fine posture in the international field. But we want to be sure that every million that is spent, is spent wisely, efficiently and thoughtfully.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

Mr. Macquarrie: As one of those who left CIDA said, "Better to spend half a billion dollars wisely than a billion dollars unwisely". There have been mistakes, and they may be more important than the development of a very smart electric slicer of ham in a country where religion forbids the eating of ham, or more important than the roads that did not lead anywhere. This government knows all about roads that do not go anywhere. I live in a province where we have two approaches leading out to open sea. The PEI causeway has been abandoned after an expenditure of \$20 million, abandoned by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) at the very time when the members of the standing committee were down in the maritimes looking into its feasibility. So it is not only in the developing countries that we have roads that are abandoned and that do not really reach their destination.

What we have in mind, and what my distinguished colleague has in mind, is an invitation to the new minister, who is an excellent parliamentarian, to make it easier for all Canadians to be proud of what their government is doing in the troubled parts of the world. That is what we want.

I am not one of those who is at all reluctant to support aid to developing countries, and I come from a part of the land that has been long neglected. In fact we in the maritimes have been so long neglected that we are supposed to get used to it. In other parts of Canada if you treat them ill, they talk about separation or alienation. We are supposed only to say, "ho, hum" because it has always been that way. But I am not hesitant and never have been reluctant to speak strongly on behalf of external aid in the part of Canada which has been most neglected economically.

I am not deterred by those who say that charity begins at home and ask what is the use of helping these other people, because in my short life I have observed that those people who say that are usually not too charitable at home either, and they are not the kind of people from whom I take my signals.

It is not, as the minister mentioned, that we are objecting to sending rice seedlings to Bangladesh, that country that has gone through such travail and turmoil. Never was there a suggestion of that kind. We want the curtains of secrecy brushed aside. We want the light of day to enter into this very important department. We want to be assured, to be convinced, that all is going as well as is reasonably possible. We do not expect perfection. In fact there is far too much secrecy in this government.

I asked as long ago as April 8 last-year what military equipment we were sending to various parts of the world. Apparently we are selling so much of it all over the world that it takes nearly a year to get the figures totted up. So let us have an end to evasions and secrecy. Let us have openness, so that our external aid program, as we used to call it, may be one of the finest in the world, and one of which all of us can be proud.

Mr. Speaker: It being six o'clock I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock this evening.

At six o'clock the House took recess.