

[Texte]

Mr. Comber: This is a bad time. I guess I would have to characterize them as being specialists in international development. Yes, some of them are biologists and environmentalists, etc., but they're specialists in international development. This is a bad time to be a specialist in international development. CIDA is not hiring. You've probably heard from the president of IDRC; they've just cut back, etc. NGOs are suffering. I think these people will be looking all over the world for appropriate types of positions.

• 1640

Mr. LeBlanc: Would you say there is no other real centre for ocean research, aside from the International Institute of Oceans in Malta, that is really a focal point for the activities of people with their particular skills? Is that what I hear you saying? Are they going to dissipate it?

Mr. Comber: That is our premise. I might say that they only have about four people working for them. They are a very, very small organization.

Mr. LeBlanc: So then you would be the biggest agency doing this particular kind of work in the world. You would be the largest concentration of professionals engaged in in this type of activity in the world. Is that correct?

Mr. Comber: With that kind of focus I would have to say yes.

Mr. LeBlanc: Thank you.

Mr. Friesen (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley): To what extent have you been working in conjunction with CIDA until now?

Mr. Farmer: I think in general, historically, there has been a very close relationship. I know when I came on CIDA received a very high priority. I spent a lot of time in CIDA, getting to know some of the senior management. I was fortunate also to be invited by them to join one of their gatherings with their staff to review what directions they were moving in. I think it was starting to develop a very close relationship, and, from my understanding, in future was going to be very important in relation to CIDA. The relationships were good.

Frankly, in the light of the SECOR recommendations, where in fact they were wanting to make CIDA more or less into a policy development agency and so forth, they did have a requirement to have access to implementing agencies with capabilities. So to see CIDA going through this point of change and to have seen an implementing agency taken out and being brought back into CIDA, it's a very unstable time, I would say, quite frankly.

Mr. Friesen: I was in Senegal a few years ago when the Winegard committee was doing its study on CIDA. I visited a sea coast development, a fish plant that had been built by France, with the best of intentions, with the best of planning. Countries are capable of designing an aid project that doesn't make it and France did one of those. So Senegal came to Canada and asked that we take a look at it, or maybe our people stumbled on it. At any rate, they designed the whole program, making it into a freezing plant, rather than a plant extracting oil from fish. Was that a CIDA project? It was right on the coast of Senegal.

[Traduction]

M. Comber: Où la conjoncture leur est malheureusement peu favorable. Il s'agit essentiellement de personnes spécialisées dans le développement international, même si nous avons un certain nombre de biologistes et de spécialistes de l'environnement. Toujours est-il que l'ACDI n'engage pas, et le CRDI réduit son personnel, etc. Les ONG également éprouvent des difficultés. Donc, ces gens devront chercher du travail un peu partout dans le monde.

M. LeBlanc: Donc, à part l'Institut international d'océanographie, à Malte, il n'existe pas d'autres instituts de ce genre susceptibles d'engager ces personnes, si je comprends bien.

M. Comber: C'est exact. D'ailleurs, l'Institut international d'océanographie n'a que quatre spécialistes, car c'est un très petit organisme.

M. LeBlanc: Donc, le vôtre est le principal organisme de ce genre au monde, et vous réunissez le plus grand nombre de spécialistes.

M. Comber: C'est exact.

M. LeBlanc: Merci.

M. Friesen (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley): Est-ce que vous avez beaucoup coopéré avec l'ACDI jusqu'à présent?

M. Farmer: Nous avons toujours eu des liens très étroits. Lorsque j'ai assumé mon poste, j'ai passé pas mal de temps à l'ACDI pour faire connaissance avec les normes de la direction. J'y ai également participé à une des réunions du personnel chargé de passer en revue leurs options pour l'avenir. Nous avons donc des contacts très étroits avec l'ACDI.

D'ailleurs, selon les recommandations de SECOR, l'ACDI doit s'occuper désormais davantage d'élaborer les grandes orientations en confiant des tâches à d'autres institutions comme la nôtre. Donc, tous ces chambardements nous laissent plutôt perplexes.

M. Friesen: J'étais au Sénégal il y a quelques années, à l'époque où la Commission Winegard faisait une étude sur l'ACDI. On m'avait montré une installation pour le conditionnement du poisson construite par la France, avec bien entendu les meilleures intentions du monde, mais, dans la pratique, ce projet a échoué. Le Sénégal s'est donc adressé au Canada pour lui demander son aide. Nos spécialistes ont donc proposé une installation pour surgeler le poisson plutôt que pour extraire l'huile de poisson. Est-ce qu'il s'agissait d'un projet de l'ACDI?