

helpful. I hope that a special command post will be established to deal with this specific crisis and this ongoing tragedy.

● (1520)

On a personal note, there are hundreds of people from Jamaica in my congregation of St. Hilda's Church in Toronto, thousands of people in my riding and hundreds of thousands in Toronto, who are of Jamaican origin. They are no doubt pleased to know that Canada and Canadians join them in wishing to help in this urgent and tragic situation. The Government and the people of Jamaica have already declared their own intention to face and meet this challenge alone, if necessary, but they are calling on their friends to join them.

We call upon our Government to carry on, after the attention moves away, extra long-range assistance and to provide regular reports from the Department of External Affairs on the problems in Jamaica and the efforts Canada is making on its behalf. It should not be just a passing matter. What is happening there should be reported from time to time in a regular way.

I am sure I reflect not only the sentiments of the Liberal caucus but the feeling of all Canadians when I express our anguish and sympathy and concern for the people of Jamaica, wherever they are, and to the anxious relatives and friends of Jamaican extraction, especially to our Canadian population of Jamaican origin.

What I have said about Jamaica, I feel should also apply to the Cayman Islands and to other areas which have been devastated and which have received less publicity. I trust our Department of External Affairs will commit itself to monitoring those problems and needs with the same dedication.

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, and Canadians generally, I want to join the Minister in expressing our sympathy and concern for the peoples of the Caribbean, particularly those people of Jamaica who have been devastated by Hurricane Gilbert. As has been pointed out, Hurricane Gilbert is the most devastating storm we have seen in this century. The losses are incalculable. We do not yet know the extent of loss in terms of life or in terms of goods and property. As the Minister noted, that problem extends even to our own High Commission in Jamaica.

We need to reflect on what this means for ordinary people in Jamaica who have seen the loss of everything for which they have worked.

We need to remember that Jamaica has not only been buffeted by Hurricane Gilbert but it has been at the centre of the storm on world's debt. It has been buffeted in recent years by the International Monetary Fund and by its policies. We are talking about a Government and a people who have very little latitude to deal with their own problems. They have very

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little in the way of resources because in effect that country has been bled dry by the policies of the IMF. We need to keep that in mind as we think of this generous response of the Canadian people. This response of the Canadian people to a crisis such as a hurricane is generous, but we also have to remember that Canadians, as part of the IMF, have been part of the problem for a country like Jamaica.

I am sure that all Canadians will welcome the initiative of the Canadian Government to help the people who are most affected in sending money and in attempts to trace the relatives of Canadian immigrants who still live in Jamaica and, indeed, visitors, because there are many Canadians who visit Jamaica on a regular basis.

I think the Government's decision to send a task force to assess the damage is very important because, as the Minister pointed out, this is an emergency that has come upon us suddenly. We have not had time to prepare. The Minister pointed out that she did not even have time to give the kind of notice to opposition Members she would have liked to have given with respect to her statement, and we can understand that. There was a need for emergency action in response to something no one could have foreseen.

I am very pleased the Government is taking the initiative to match the contributions individual Canadians and Canadian organizations will be making. I hope it will also play some kind of co-ordinating role to help encourage Canadians to give. I was pleased to see there is no ceiling placed on this matching limit. I hope the Government is not going to impose a ceiling later on as it did with the matching contributions to relief in Ethiopia three years ago.

The Minister and my colleague in the Liberal Party have pointed out that there is a long and historic tie between our two nations. This has been deepened by extensive immigration from Jamaica to Canada in the last few decades. I think that indicates that this Government must continue to give the Jamaican situation very high priority. Jamaica is this week's news. Hurricane Gilbert is this week's news. But all of us know that this week's news has a way of passing into yesterday's rather dry history. What we need to emphasize in this House today is the need for the Canadian Government, CIDA and the Department of External Affairs, to continue to watch over this situation and ensure our response in terms of personnel and money is commensurate with the situation. We do not yet know what the total situation is, but as the facts become more available, Canadians want to be sure that the Government will be responding in a way that is appropriate to the real needs of the Jamaican people, and to ensure also that the money goes where it is most needed, to the poorest of the poor.

Again, I want to express our sympathy and support for the people of Jamaica and our support for every effort the Canadian Government will be making to help.