

CIDA

Mr. Speaker, we feel the time is ripe for a debate in this House, rather than in the Standing Committee on External Affairs when the president of CIDA appears for his annual accounting, since our solidarity with the third world, and the way in which we prove it, entail political objectives for which government and Parliament as a whole, rather than CIDA'S president alone, or a single vague interministerial committee, are responsible.

The time and place are all the more well chosen for our motion that the estimates for the financial year ending on March 31, 1976 were tabled yesterday, and that the only credit for CIDA provides for expenditures of about \$734,311,000—some \$145 million more than the estimates for 1974-75.

● (1530)

[English]

In putting forward, on behalf of my leader and my party, the motion to be discussed today I would like you, Mr. Speaker, and the members of the House to understand fully the intent and purport of our concern.

At a time when the international viability of world resource management and distribution continues to be questioned, at a time when starvation and the political and social disorder that starvation brings, remains basic to the international horizon, nations where starvation is never present have a simple and direct duty to help others. At a time when the emergence of the third world is no longer idle prognostication but a political and bureaucratic reality, the developed world has a duty to its own security and to the international community to provide the developing nations with meaningful and well thought-out aid and development assistance.

That is the framework within which we seek greater scrutiny for CIDA and its operations. That is the urgent political reality which demands greater scrutiny by a committee of this House and by the House itself and, more important, that is the very political framework which the minister and the government to date appear to reject or choose to ignore. Those opposite are once again indulging in the old "Catch 22" approach to government policy that so frequently typifies the attitude of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to public policy and debate. Simply stated, the approach can be put thus: If you question how we run our program, you are against the program. If your not against the program, don't ask questions.

The logic of that approach may escape you, Mr. Speaker, as much as it escapes those of us seeking to scrutinize this particular agency's operations. But then again, perhaps we err even in wanting to ask questions. Perhaps we err in wanting to know why foreign aid has become the personal fiefdom of one man, why that fiefdom appears to be in revolt—the best example is the Price Waterhouse report on personnel turnover, a report which still remains a very secret document—and why this government has placed this little empire above scrutiny. Perhaps we err in seeking to have the activities of this agency brought before a special parliamentary committee for some frank discussion, some thorough probing, without the restrictions which are normally imposed by the rules of the House on the study of estimates. Perhaps we err in thinking that the

[Mr. Wagner.]

government might treat the committee with any more respect than they treat this House.

Perhaps we err when we wonder why no government official, no minister, has jumped to the stringent defence of the agency in the face of fairly serious allegations made by an Ottawa newspaper concerning its management and internal policies. Is a defence now being put together? Does the government have a defence? Will we hear it today? Will the minister speak, or will he delegate someone else? Does this government care enough about its foreign aid establishment to defend the key foreign aid agency?

These are the questions we pose, not out of antagonism to the agency but out of a desire to ensure that our foreign aid programs are going to the right places, are administered in the right fashion and are providing the most valuable help possible to the recipient nations; because any failure of CIDA in this regard is a failure of our government to understand how contentious an issue foreign aid can become in times of, thanks to this government, growing national anxiety about economic resources and capacity.

If this House is more concerned today about foreign aid spending, if we seek more answers and more information it is because we know, as politicians, how difficult it is to justify foreign aid spending to the men and women who pay the taxes and find it more and more difficult to make ends meet. This is not to say that we do not have a responsibility to continue to fight for the importance of foreign aid and our nation's commitment to that aid: on the contrary, that fight must continue.

But I say to this government that their over-all attitude toward CIDA and its operations, their over-all refusal to allow for a clearing of the air and an examination of the record, does not help the foreign aid cause very much at all. In many respects it weakens the foreign aid cause so that one might justifiably ask whether this government is seeking some excuse to back down from its already less than impressive commitments in this field. The attitude of this government in regard to CIDA, their complacency, their nonchalance, is typical of their concerns in other areas.

I was touched when the Prime Minister worried about social disorder and fragmentation at a party fund-raising dinner in Montreal. While I was not as deeply touched as those who paid to hear the "sermon on the mount," I must say that I was struck by this new-found concern for social disorder, a social disorder that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) pointed to before the last election and for which he has provided some preventive answers. But then to talk about future difficulty, to call for action, was to express no confidence in the Canadian people. The land was strong—and Lalonde is expensive—the economy was strong, we were better off and all we had to do was shut off the prophets of doom and gloom.

● (1540)

Now this government worries about social disorder. Campaign promises which the government cannot afford to keep are now being shelved because the votes have been counted and the electorate can be sent out to pasture for