

Canadians, I am sure, do not object to doing our share in helping starving nations.

The Prime Minister's visit to Cuba and the comments he made while there have certainly caused confusion around the world. To add to the confusion the Prime Minister has dispatched Ivan Head, his foreign policy adviser, to London to explain what the Prime Minister said or did not say while in Cuba. That is another matter and not what I am mainly concerned about tonight.

I want to repeat that in the future CIDA contracts with underprivileged or underdeveloped countries should have clauses under which aid would be immediately cut off if those countries became engaged in a war, or their economic situation improved. In addition, an immediate examination should be made of the present CIDA contracts to see if there is any possible way of halting aid to Cuba while she is engaged in the Angola war, and I certainly hope there are no negotiations going on at the present time to grant further aid or cash to Cuba.

I hope the parliamentary secretary can enlighten the Canadian people on this very important subject tonight. In closing, let me say that the latest report today states that Cuba has up to 7,000 troops and advisers in the Middle East, 4,000 men in Syria, 3,000 in south Yeman, and 2,000 in Africa apart from the 12,000 in Angola. Cuba hardly seems like a country which needs CIDA aid from Canada.

[Translation]

**Mr. Walter Smith (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Supply and Services):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to give a few details on the Canadian help program extended to Cuba. I would first mention that that country's poverty is below the \$500 *per capita* level per year, which compares with Trinidad and Tobago, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Jamaica and other countries with which Canada pursues a cooperation program. I would further note that the Cuban government has given very high priority, in its development efforts, to the redistribution of goods and services, and that its whole plan is closely linked to the social and economic development of the Cuban people. The Canadian help program is related to the top priority areas of Cuba's development plan. Our effort is basically aimed at providing goods and services capable of generating development.

To date, the total Canadian help extended to Cuba amounts to \$14.2 million of that amount, 35 per cent will have been spent before the end of the current fiscal year, and the remainder will be spent during the following 18 months.

The technical assistance program totals \$4.2 million, in the form of grants. It includes projects such as these: The CUJAE project, aiming at increasing the number of specialized engineers in Cuba, with \$1,147,000 grant; the animal health research project, with a Canadian grant of about \$154,000; the citrus industry development project, a \$505,000 grant; the fishing industry stimulation project, \$1,705,000; the project involving the establishment of a research and development centre on conversion of sugar cane residues into paper, a \$300,000 grant; the project aimed at reinforcing the medical equipment maintenance system in medical and hospital centres, a \$275,000 grant.

The other programs are similar in nature and always meet specific needs. The government of Canada takes the

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required steps so as to ensure that Canadian funds are used for the projects they were intended for.

A line of credit of \$10 million under the form of a loan at an interest rate of 3 per cent has been granted to Cuba. It supposes the purchase from Canada of equipment necessary to the development of Cuba in priority areas like agriculture, public health and scientific research. All the items supplied through this credit are submitted to a close interdepartmental study to ensure that they are in keeping with the objectives agreed on at the time the credit was granted.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary but the three minutes available to him have now expired.

[English]

### VETERANS AFFAIRS—DELAY IN PROCESSING PENSION APPLICATIONS—GOVERNMENT ACTION

**Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie):** Mr. Speaker, I rise at this time to refer to a matter I raised on February 10 pertaining to applications by veterans for pensions. At that time in reply to my question the minister gave a stock answer which he had given me three years earlier, and followed this up in reply to a question by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) with another stock answer. I tried to pursue this matter further because I was not satisfied.

I should like at this time to recite the chronology of the events leading up to that question. An applicant submitted an application in May, 1973. He waited about six months and then wrote to the Pension Commission, who in turn informed him it would take about a year and a half. He waited until the following February 19. Then he gave me a copy of the letter he received from the government in which he was told it would be about 18 months before he would have any kind of a response.

The right hon. member for Prince Albert at about that time rose on the subject, and I did not feel it was necessary to duplicate his question. At that time, as I have said, the minister gave the stock answer in respect of the number of applications processed and so on. I then went over and spoke to the minister personally. I also wrote him a letter in which I told him that I had been advised that if we asked to have the application withdrawn it would lose its priority and go to the bottom of the list. I went to the minister with the thought that if he made an appeal this might speed up the application.

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I then wrote to the applicant, informing him that I had spoken to the minister. I received an interim reply from the minister in a lengthy letter explaining the situation in the same terms he had explained to the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) why it took so long. I sent a note to the applicant giving the minister's reply.

I then received a letter from the minister stating that he had checked with the commission and that the application was put on a priority basis. That was in May, 1974, about a year after the application had been filed. This was done on a priority basis, I was told. In January I heard from him