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CANADA'S COMMITMENT TO DARFUR, SUDAN

Inquiry—Debate Continued

Speech by:

The Honourable Larry W. Campbell

Wednesday, May 2, 2007

THE SENATE

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CANADA'S COMMITMENT TO DARFUR, SUDAN

INQUIRY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Dallaire calling the attention of the Senate to the situation in the Darfur region of Sudan and the importance of Canada's commitment to the people of this war-torn country.—(*Honourable Senator Andreychuk*)

Hon. Larry W. Campbell: Honourable senators, I am standing for Senator Andreychuk. I have spoken to the senator and she has graciously allowed me to speak.

I will begin by prefacing my decision to stand before you today with the knowledge that I am a strong believer in making sure that one's house is in order before attempting to fix all the problems that exist throughout the world. With that being said, this issue is one that is so egregious that I feel compelled to speak.

The death and human misery in Darfur has dragged on for far too long and despite a concerted effort by fellow colleagues in this chamber, the government has refused to heed the call for immediate action.

Unfortunately, the ability of humanity to be indifferent to the plight of others is staggering and something that always astounds me. Our willingness to put off the inevitable and act in heartless self-interest at a great cost to human lives is shocking and one that I find personally repulsive.

Senator Dallaire made a statement on the subject of the value of human life, which I find inspiring: "We would do well to remember that humans are human — not one of us is more human than the other."

• (1520)

I could remind honourable senators about the 200,000 civilians that have been killed to date. I could mention the 2.5 million displaced persons driven from their homes by government-backed militias. I could mention that the Africa Union, which has attempted to step up to solve the problem with a made-in-Africa solution, has run out of funding and capacity, leaving the majority of the forces in the region unpaid and grossly inadequate. I could mention all of these things, but they are all already known to us.

The government in Khartoum is incredibly cunning. They know that the longer this issue draws out, the less concentrated the international call for change will be. They know we have a short attention span and a strong aversion to risk. They know that the international community is like a child that cannot foresee the benefit of short-term pain for long-term gain.

Honourable senators, Canada needs to take a stand. We have lost respect at home and around the world on our poor environmental stewardship, our neglect of Aboriginal peoples, the insufficient protection of Canadian citizens abroad and on our ability to formulate a strong and successful vision for Afghanistan. Our lead on the issue of Darfur would be a strong step toward repairing our moral compass and reinstating our role as a can-do country.

I know many will criticize this initiative. They will tell us our forces are already stretched too thin, and I agree. What I am calling for, however, along with Senator Dallaire, is for the contributions of military equipment and training staff, which the Canadian military does have on hand, as well as our excellent Canadian diplomatic leadership on the issue to create coherent and consistent international pressure on the Government of Sudan. By doing so, we would uphold our responsibility to protect and, in the face of such brazen breaches of human rights, would demonstrate our resolve.

There have been no less than six UN resolutions on Darfur, all of which have gone unanswered. Last year, UN Security Council Resolution 1706 gave the world some hope that action would finally be taken. The call for a 20,000-strong force of peacekeepers was an action that could potentially quell the conflict and return some semblance of normalcy for the women, children and men in Darfur.

The Khartoum government has managed to stall the mission ever since. How long will we wait — until they kill the remaining 2.5 million displaced individuals?

I would like to remind the government of what Dante said:

The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in times of great moral crises maintain their neutrality.

On motion of Senator Jaffer, for Senator Andreychuk, debate adjourned.