

For more than a century Canadians have been assisting people in developing countries to make better lives for themselves, well before the beginning of official government assistance. That effort was undertaken almost entirely by voluntary groups and churches. If you look at some other countries, and at their traditions, you will often find that much of their commitment, much of their development assistance is ideological in nature. It was accomplished and offered with some very specific ends in mind. Furthermore, other countries often focused on one particular area or region. But in Canada, our involvement and commitment has been refreshingly free of ideology and it has literally spanned the earth. Its foundation, rather than being based on the sale of products, or the sale of purposes, is rooted in humanity, good will and a sense of service.

I believe that it does not detract from the strictly religious work of the missionaries to argue that their health, education and development work is very much in that tradition as well.

Not only Catholic missionaries but female Catholic missionaries have been in the forefront of Canadian service abroad. Just over one-half of the Canadian Catholic missionaries operating throughout the world today are women. The first Canadian missionary society was both Catholic and female (the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, founded in Montreal in 1902). Its members were involved in hospitals, schools and social work in missions in China, Manchuria, Japan, the Phillipines, Italy, the Antilles, Africa and Madagascar.

And to the work of the churches must be added that of the legion of Canadian service clubs and non-governmental organizations like OXFAM, the Canadian Save the Children Fund, Inter-Pares, the Mennonite Central Committee, Rotary, CUSO, and many more. I am told that more than 10,000 Canadians have served overseas with CUSO since it was founded in the early 1960s. There is literally no way of knowing the total number of Canadians in various organizations, churches and others who have undertaken similar ventures.

Some years ago the American Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, developed a reputation for being involved in personal diplomacy. That was to say that he would fly around to meet directly people who were involved in problems that the United States wanted to help solve. Well that is one use of the term, personal diplomacy, but the individuals who went out