

XVI -- Conclusion

The twin problems of rapid population growth and mass migration are immense and complex; and if they are not tackled very seriously in the next few years, their scale is bound to increase drastically in the coming century; the environmental sustainability and political stability of the world system will be threatened, and Canada will suffer with the rest. On population, it has become fairly clear what should be done, but so far the will is lacking to deploy the necessary resources, which are large but not enormous. On migration, the answers are not yet so evident, but the resources eventually required may be even greater, if a reduction in North-South economic disparity proves ultimately to be the only long-term solution.

These issues, and particularly that of population, tend to get crowded out from the agenda of governments in favour of more pressing day-to-day concerns, economic and political; but like the environment, they are basic to our future, and must take their place among our priority concerns. They are, so to speak, the somber continuing drone of the bagpipes, against which the tune of events is played. This is why one of the main initial objectives of our policy should be to foster much greater awareness--both in Canada and internationally--of the nature and the importance of the various underlying trends, and their relationships to one another; preceding sections of this paper contain a number of suggestions about things that we could do to this end.

In parallel, we need to do somewhat more to put our own house in order, in part so as to put us in a better position to act internationally. As indicated in some detail earlier, the range of measures we could consider include: focusing more of our diplomatic and expert resources on these issues; clarifying and enhancing aspects of our population assistance activities; changing some emphases in the immigration field; and ensuring that our own thinking on the complex links between population, development, migration and the environment is as clear as this difficult, opaque subject will allow.

But the fundamental requirement, as the Government has rightly stressed, is for a large and sustained expansion in international involvement and cooperation. Canada is well placed to play an important role in this process, because of the many influential fora and bilateral contacts available to us. This paper has suggested a number of specific ways in which we could make use of them, although new approaches may, of course, become preferable as the situation evolves. The key point, however, is that we are faced with very long-term questions, and reaching solutions will be an equally long-term task, with a need for much patience and consistent effort over a generation and more. Are we up to it? Is the world community up to it? One must earnestly hope so.

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