

Let us be in no doubt about it -- a great deal is being done. Development assistance has reached record levels and developing nations are becoming increasingly skillful at shaping and implementing plans for economic and social advancement. The economic indicators show that the poor nations are making some headway in their struggle to break the shackles of poverty.

What is being done does not yet match the need and some recent trends give cause for serious concern. Although the volume of assistance has grown substantially during the past decade, continued growth is threatened by economic difficulties and, to some extent, by disenchantment in some key developed countries. In recent years, the terms on which assistance is granted have shown a marked tendency to harden. For many developing countries the growing burden of debt service is eating away at foreign-exchange earnings already eroded by falling prices for many of their traditional exports, and by barriers to their access to markets.

It is for this reason that the study being undertaken by the World Bank's Commission on International Development, headed by a former Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. L.B. Pearson, and Sir Robert Jackson's study of the capacity of the development machinery of the United Nations are so important and so timely. Their reports will provide new insights into the strength and weaknesses of past policies and procedures, and their recommendations will provide the basis for more effective international action in the future.

Never before has there been such a concerted assault by mankind on poverty and restricted opportunity. Yet even greater efforts are required to broaden the base of public support throughout the world for the cause of international development in the Second Development Decade.

Setting guide-lines and targets is only a beginning. Success or failure will ultimately depend on the determination of us all, the developed and developing countries and the international institutions, as together we come to grips with specific development projects.

Let me relate these considerations to Canadian policy. It is our declared national objective to improve the lot of the poor and under-privileged through development and trade. The level of the Canadian development-assistance program has increased very substantially in recent years and, despite the application of budgetary restraints to high-priority domestic programs, it will continue to grow.

Moreover, we are making a determined effort to improve the quality of our development assistance and our capacity to administer the larger program that we envisage for the future. Our experience has convinced us that development is hindered as much by a lack of knowledge, or a failure to apply the knowledge already available, as by inadequate resources. At this particular moment in time, the knowledge gap is even more critical than the resource gap. As a contribution to meeting this need, we expect to introduce legislation in the forthcoming session of the Canadian Parliament to provide for the establishment of a Canadian International Development Research Center.