

Programme of Concerted Practical Action in the Social Field

In recent years a number of countries have advocated a detailed examination of the activities of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies in the social field, to ensure an effective concentration of efforts and resources,¹ and a Report on a Programme of Concerted Practical Action has been prepared. At its sixteenth session in 1953, the Economic and Social Council drew up a resolution on this subject for submission to the General Assembly.

This resolution expressed agreement with the Secretary-General and the heads of the Specialized Agencies that there was need for re-orientation and concentration of effort, wider geographical coverage, improvement of methods and techniques, additional resources and full governmental and popular co-operation; and stated that special attention should be devoted to broader sources of international financing of international social and economic development and to the needs of under-developed areas. It also set out general principles for assistance to governments and listed eight kinds of projects on which a concerted programme should concentrate. As an immediate objective, particular attention should be paid to assisting governments by:

- (1) promotion and implementation of community development projects;
- (2) rapid development of training programmes for professional and technical personnel;
- (3) development and strengthening of national and local organizations for administering social programmes.

At the eighth session of the General Assembly strong differences of approach emerged during the discussions. Some delegations took the view that economic development must be accompanied by corresponding social progress. Others argued that economic development was the only possible foundation for improvement in the general standard of living. While the majority opinion was that social progress could not be forced beyond the economic capacity of countries and the limited resources of the United Nations, others urged a more energetic approach. A resolution passed on October 23, 1953 by the General Assembly invited the Secretary-General and the Specialized Agencies to keep in mind the principles, methods and techniques defined by ECOSOC, recommended that the Council add to the programme a paragraph on improving health, education and social welfare in the non-self-governing territories and trust territories, and requested it to keep the development of the programme under review and to report progress to the General Assembly.

Canada voted in favour of this resolution. In the Third Committee of the Assembly the Canadian Representative made three main observations: first, that one of the most valuable results of the effort to formulate a programme of concerted practical action in the social field has been the concentration of effort in certain clearly defined areas where there is some prospect of worthwhile results; second, that as a result of drawing up the proposed programme the true role and functions of the United Nations in the social field have emerged

¹See *Canada and the United Nations 1952-53*, pp. 38-39.