

In 1959, John Diefenbaker talked about the then-young Canadian aid program which began with the Colombo Plan, the Commonwealth's imaginative initiative to assist the newly independent countries of Asia. Our contribution to that program then had its critics and its supporters, as does the ODA program today.

Mr. Diefenbaker said at that time: "The good citizen and the good nation must recognize its obligations to the broad community of men...while we have our duty to ourselves and our special relationship to our family and neighbours, more and more, we, as Canadians and as citizens of the world, must seek to share the problems of every continent."

That is part of the Canadian character. Canadians at our best are a generous people, a people willing to share, a people who believe that the fate of others deserves more than a shrug. At home, we believe that the national government has a moral obligation to assist those regions less fortunate than others. We believe it is a moral obligation of governments to care for individuals who cannot care for themselves. And we are unwilling to have that attitude stop at our borders. For most Canadians, bloated bellies and hollow eyes are not a matter of indifference.

That is why thousands of Canadians donated time and money to the victims of drought and famine in Ethiopia. That is why for decades Canadian children have collected for UNICEF at Halloween and Canadian doctors went to Mexico City after that city's devastating earthquake. That is why Canadians have sent missionaries to China, food to Africa, and blankets and blood to Armenia.

That is also why most Canadians would disagree with the National Citizens Coalition when, for example, they criticize the expenditure of taxpayers dollars to develop a low-cost, environmentally-safe latrine system in Guatemala. That project costs Canadians \$215,000. Five million children around the world die from diarrheal disease each year. Compassionate Canadians want to contribute to saving those lives. And that's what this project is about.

For decades, a substantial majority of the Canadian population has supported ODA through thick and thin, in times of plenty and in times of restraint. Because they know that no matter how tough times get here, they will always be better here than they are there, in so many corners of the world.

But for those who dismiss that notion, and who do not believe morality has a proper place in the foreign policy of this nation, there are other arguments in favour of ODA. These are hard-headed arguments, pocket-book arguments, arguments which say that ODA serves Canada as much as it does others.