

Supply—External Affairs

authorized the United States government to enter into negotiations with any country that wanted advice on population matters. Last April I attended a conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico, dealing with the population problems of the western hemisphere. This conference was sponsored by a private organization, the international planned parenthood federation, and I was a delegate from the Canadian society. However, I found out later that part of the costs of this conference were paid by the state department, and at that conference a representative of the state department, from the agency for international aid, appeared and further elaborated on the change which had taken place in United States policy. The person who did that was Mr. William D. Rodgers, deputy United States co-ordinator, alliance for progress agency for international development, department of state. He had this to say:

As you know, the United Nations passed without a dissenting vote a population resolution proposed by the African and Asian nations in December, 1963. A few months later the U.S. congress adopted the Fulbright amendment to the foreign assistance act. This amendment enable A.I.D. to fulfil requests from Latin American nations for assistance with respect to demographic aspects of development. This we are ready to do. Our efforts will be concentrated in the fields of information, training and research. We intend to co-operate closely with all responsible segments of society, church, private and public organizations; and will constantly reflect the fact that such matters are in the last analysis the choice and initiative of each individual family.

I should mention in passing, Mr. Chairman, that although I attended as a delegate of a private organization in Canada, at this conference there were representatives from every country in North and South America. Some of them represented private organizations but many of the countries sent official government delegations. Among the countries which sent official government delegations were these ones from Latin America: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela. I mention that particularly because they are countries with predominantly Roman Catholic populations and it is an indication that they have been concerned about this problem that they were willing to send official government delegates to this conference. The United States delegate at the conference announced that his government is assigning an officer in each United States mission in Latin America to act as a liaison with the local authorities on population matters.

[Mr. Prittie.]

I do not quite understand why the Canadian delegation under this government at the United Nations, and also the delegations of previous governments, have taken the stand which they have taken. If this stand is based upon fear of offending the sensibilities of Roman Catholics in Canada or is based upon the fear of some reaction at the polls if they do take action, then if that is the case I suggest that our stand was based upon myths which should no longer exist.

I am convinced from what I have read, from my discussions with people and from the type of response on this subject which members of parliament have received concerning a bill which I introduced, that this massive opposition by Roman Catholics in Canada to any discussion of population planning does not exist. In fact, as we know there has been a great deal of discussion on this matter recently by the church and by some of the leading prelates of the church. Therefore, I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, to the minister and his colleagues that this particular policy be re-examined with a view to the Canadian delegation at the United Nations this year taking a different stand from that which it has taken in the past.

Mr. Watson (Châteauguay-Huntingdon-La-prairie): Mr. Chairman, I should like to take a very few minutes of the committee's time to bring the attention of the minister to one area of our external relations where I think Canada could shine forth but is not doing so. I submit that Canada should immediately launch a peace corps type operation. The United States has a successful program in effect. This year there will be over 10,000 people in the field as a result of the United States peace corps program. Britain, France and Germany are all considering launching similar type programs and within a year or two each will have two or three thousand men and women in the field.

I submit that Canadian representatives would have a twofold advantage over any representatives from these older colonial countries. We can supply technicians to teach and to work in two of the world's major languages. In addition we are in the enviable position of not having enemies abroad either old or new, so we cannot be tarred by any stretch of the imagination as being colonialists.

Our French language students have a particularly important role to play in Africa where I think the French and the Belgians are suspect as colonialists. We have embassy