

increased assistance is of high priority. The world is in the midst of a complex of crises in which population factors play a major role in many developing nations. The volume of requests for international assistance is increasing at a rapid rate, outstripping the resources available through the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, the major multilateral channel,

which the developing nations support with enthusiasm. Canada should follow through on the offers of additional assistance made at the conference. Not to do so would confirm the emptiness of our words at a time when international confidence in rich nations is already at a low ebb. It would also be to miss a major point of the conference.

## The political economics of the Bucharest debate

By André Lux

Much has been made of the fact that official delegations from nearly 140 governments and international agencies were brought together in Bucharest for two weeks in August 1974 to discuss the world's population problems in relation to the other great problems that beset mankind. The event has been hailed as a success all the more remarkable since the very idea of such a gathering would have seemed improbable as recently as 1968. It is quite true that there has been a change of awareness. Could it have been brought on by a discovery the implications of which have been realized and then brought to world-wide attention at a speed made possible by the technology of mass communications? To be sure, pollution and its harmful effects on the environment were not included in discussions about population before 1970.

And yet pollution is only a new element added to a very old file; but now the file is being scrutinized by masses of people the world over, rather than by a small number of experts and the committed few. Malthus drew heavily on this file and gave his name to it at the beginning of the last century. This was the time of the great

changes and upheavals that marked the first phase of the Industrial Revolution in England, which by comparison made the rest of Europe and the world appear fragile and under-developed. This period, when the benefits of economic growth were still meagre and poorly distributed, was also characterized by the first great wave of population growth. The conjunction of these two phenomena was not without influence on Malthus, for it gave evidence of what might be termed over-population relative to insufficient development. Over-population is always relative to something. It was particularly relative to Malthus's excusable ignorance of the level of abundance that the industrialization of Europe and North America would produce 150 years later.

Thus stands the analogy between Malthus's time and the present; it is an analogy that has both resemblance and dissimilarity. It is often said that Malthus wrote too soon, that he was mistaken in his predictions for the countries that are wealthy today, but that he was an excellent prophet of the misfortunes that are in store for us at the end of the present century. From this point of view, 1972, with the appearance of *The Limits to Growth*, could well recall 1798 and the first edition of the celebrated *Essay on the Principle of Population*.

The resemblance ends here, however, and the dissimilarities between the two eras begin to appear in all their complexity. Malthus was speaking at the dawn of an industrial revolution that was to make the West fabulously wealthy; Meadows, on the other hand, haunted by a recent trip to India, writes at a time when the same Western world is being smothered by the



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