

TOWARD A WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

The following is a partial text of a statement made in the Second Committee of the United Nations on December 8, 1961, by Mr. Gordon Aiken, the Canadian representative on the Committee:

"...We are today embarking on the final stage of our journey, begun a year ago, to develop a new international and multilateral approach to the tragic problems of hunger and malnutrition in so many parts of the world. Let us rise to our responsibility and press on to achieve something truly effective and worthy of the United Nations.

"Mr. Chairman, this is a particularly happy day for my delegation, which is privileged to recall the proposal made on September 26, 1960, by the Prime Minister of Canada... to the General Assembly for the creation of a World Food Bank.

"Members of this Committee are already aware of the action taken at the 1961 conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome. Acting on developments set in motion by General Assembly Resolution 1496 (XV), the conference established the outlines of an initial experimental three-year programme. This programme, and the means to put it into operation, are our primary concern today.

ANALYSIS OF RESOLUTION

"Turning now to the draft resolution contained in document A/C.2/L.617 sponsored by Cameroun, Denmark, Liberia, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, the U.S.A. and ourselves, I should like to refer firstly to the annex attached to the resolution. This annex contains the principles unanimously adopted by the entire membership of the FAO, which includes the vast majority of the countries represented here today. These principles were the result of four weeks of diligent effort at FAO to arrive at a workable and effective programme. For this reason, we have in the first operative paragraph of the resolution proposed that this Assembly accept the principles agreed upon by the FAO and, in so doing, approve the establishment of the World Food Programme. Shortly stated, the resolution provides for the establishment of an initial experimental programme for three years of approximately \$100 million contributed on a voluntary basis, to be undertaken jointly by the UN and the FAO, with the co-operation of appropriate intergovernmental bodies. The plan provides for contributions in the form of appropriate commodities, acceptable services and cash. An intergovernmental committee of 20 members with an appropriately balanced composition is to be elected, 10 members by ECOSOC and 10 members by the FAO.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE

"Subject to the approval of the FAO Council and ECOSOC, it will be the task of the intergovernmental committee to draw up the conditions and procedures for the establishment and operation of the programme. In the administration of the programme, attention is to be paid to establishing adequate and orderly procedures on a world basis for meeting emergency food needs and emergencies inherent in chronic malnutrition, as well as to assisting in pre-school and

school feeding and implementing pilot projects, with the multilateral use of food as an aid to economic and social development. The committee is also charged with ensuring that adequate protection is given to commercial interests generally and to producers in developing countries.

"The remainder of the paragraphs in Part I of the resolution are, generally speaking, provisions required to make the programme operational on the part of the United Nations. These include directions to the intergovernmental committee which are intended to give it the widest measure of discretion and freedom to develop the conditions and procedures on which the proposed programme should be established and operated, subject, of course, to the final approval of ECOSOC and the FAO Council....

"Part II of the resolution recognizes that the World Food Programme constitutes a significant but modest step towards the objectives outlined in General Assembly resolution 1496 (XV) and holds out the possibility that in the future, on review by all concerned, broader objectives in the use of food may be considered.

NO SURPLUS DISPOSAL

"Mr. Chairman, the other point I wish to emphasize is that, as the Canadian delegation stressed at the FAO conference, the Canadian Government does not regard the operations of the proposed World Food Programme as a surplus-disposal activity. I think this must be said, because I should not wish to leave any doubt in the minds of the members of this Committee about this point. While it is true, of course, that we expect foodstuffs, some of which may be surplus, to play a very large role in the programme, I would stress that we have no thought that countries which do not have surplus food supplies should be expected to contribute financially or in any other way to a programme to help the surplus-capacity countries out of difficulties they may now or in the future experience. I hope the Committee will forgive me labouring that point, but it is a fact that my government sincerely hopes that this programme, starting modestly as it is bound to, will in time grow in scope and effectiveness during the coming decade to the point where it will be able to play a most important role in contributing to the solution of hunger and chronic malnutrition in the world today. We have urged, and will continue to urge, that the cash component of the contributions will be at least one-third, in order that the Programme may be flexible enough to meet the requirements of those in need, not just an outlet for what surplus-producing countries may have available. No surplus-producing country can expect to gain the support of non-surplus countries and commercial exporters for this Programme, unless this is the aim.

"Mr. Chairman, may I conclude my remarks with a brief summary of some of the basic considerations which my delegation hopes will be reflected in proposals put forward by the intergovernmental committee of twenty?

(Over)