

The Address—Mr. MacEachen

by these considerations the Canadian delegation was able to play an active, co-operative and useful role in all bodies of the conference. The delegation helped to ensure that the world population plan of action contained as balanced and realistic a relationship as possible between population and economic and social development.

While the Canadian program of international development assistance in population control has been channelled until now almost exclusively through multilateral agencies, Canada declared at Bucharest its willingness to discuss with interested parties the possibility of increased action through bilateral channels. The Canadian delegation provided leadership in obtaining recognition of the need to consider natural resources and the environment in the formulation of population policies and in giving full attention to the proper utilization of resources and the minimization of waste.

The world population plan of action, endorsed by consensus at the conference, reflects broad agreement of the international community on population issues. Only the Holy See, for doctrinal reasons, dissociated itself from the world population plan of action. Some observers have been critical of the outcome. Some, reflecting a western approach, expected a general international recognition of the problem of overpopulation. Others espoused the thesis of developing countries, that their population growth rates can only be brought into line with those of developed countries as a result of rapid economic and social development involving the transfer of real resources from rich to poor countries.

● (1610)

The most ardent defenders of both schools of thought seemed to share a high degree of conviction, dogmatism, anxiety and impatience which spoke of their deep sincerity but which tended to impair their political credibility. The fact is that the world population plan of action, imperfect as it is, represents a real achievement, an international consensus never achieved before in a highly sensitive field. It will be a useful charter upon which future action may be based on international, regional and national levels.

May I conclude by referring to another global issue that will be dealt with early in November at the world food conference in Rome. This conference is also held under the auspices of the United Nations. Like the population problem, the world food problem is massive and is not susceptible of one solution. There is, indeed, no single food problem: it arises from a complex interaction between human beings and resources in vastly differing societies. Many developing countries now face immediate problems of severe food shortages, high prices for food and other imports, and of rapidly vanishing foreign exchange reserves.

It is understandable that these countries will press at the conference for additional food aid, and that additional food aid will be necessary. However, it is clear to the government of Canada that the long-term problem cannot be met exclusively on these terms. Developing countries will have to devote much more of their own resources to food production and agricultural production. Undoubtedly, it will involve, for developing countries, upsetting long

[Mr. MacEachen.]

standing and and cherished goals related to industrialization and other major changes in their social and economic development schemes. In essence, developing countries will probably need to accord agricultural development the greatest priority.

This is one of the main issues before the conference, and the major objective will be to devise means of helping developing countries improve their production as a joint international endeavour. To this end, Canada must be prepared to give greater emphasis in its bilateral aid programs to agricultural development in developing countries. As the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) knows, we possess great technical expertise in this field which can be marshalled for this international purpose.

I mention one other point in connection with the world food conference because our position has not been finally clarified by the government. It is this: a number of proposals have been advanced for the establishment of funds and other institutional arrangements to assist in the development of agricultural sectors of developing countries. We would want to make sure that the institutions for channelling aid are so constituted as to make the best use of all funds available. If a proposal of this kind were to secure acceptance among donors at the conference, I am sure that Canadians would wish to take an active part in any such undertaking.

At the FAO conference in November of last year, certain proposals were made with respect to the co-ordinated stockholding of grain. The conference was attended by my colleague. If this proposal is raised at the world food conference, naturally Canada will want to give it support and urge its broadest possible acceptance. I have touched on very few of the problems that will be raised at the world food conference, but I hope the broad terms in which I have outlined them are sufficient to point up the great importance of this conference, for food means survival, and in this increasingly interdependent world it means the survival of us all.

May I say in conclusion that in all these forums—the law of the sea conference, the world population conference, and the world food conference—global problems affecting the welfare of all human beings are being discussed and grappled with. There is an interrelationship between theme and subject matter, and all are part of our effort to work toward global management of the earth's physical and human resources. Canada, as a member of the international community, will attempt to play a constructive role in grappling with these global problems.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, would the minister permit a question? The minister mentioned that he conferred with the representative of India and the United Nations, and mentioned one subject. Did they discuss the food shortage in India, and did the representative of India make any proposal to the minister with regard to the necessity for food, the amount involved or any specific proposal so far as Canada is concerned?

Mr. MacEachen: I think I can reply directly and frankly to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) on this point. Our discussion lasted about 45 minutes and it was confined exclusively to the question of the nuclear explosion—the Canadian attitude and the Indian attitude. The