

During the last week of October a seven member Canadian team led by Mr. Paul Gerin-Lajoie, the President of the Canadian International Development Agency, visited New Delhi and then toured the refugee camps in West Bengal, to study what more Canada could best do to help. The party was accompanied by the Canadian High Commissioner, Mr. James George. In addition to Mr. Gerin-Lajoie the Canadian team members were: Colonel Robert Christie, Department of National Defence; Dr. John Davies, Department of National Health and Welfare; Mr. Paul Ignatieff, Canadian UNICEF Committee; Mr. Neil Overend, Mr. Clyde Sanger and Mr. Fred Smith of CIDA.

In Delhi Mr. Gerin-Lajoie held discussions with the Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Swaran Singh; the Minister of Finance, Mr. Y. B. Chavan; the Minister of Rehabilitation, Mr. R. K. Khadilkar; the Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs, Mr. S. K. Banerji; the Secretary of the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Mr. G. S. Kahlon and other officials.

In Calcutta Mr. Gerin-Lajoie and party were briefed by the Governor, Mr. A. L. Dias, the Chief Secretary, Mr. N. C. Sen Gupta, and the Additional Secretary, Colonel Luthra. The Canadians visited the Salt Lake Camp near Dum Dum Airport and other camps in the Kalyani, Amdanga and Basirhat areas. They also had an opportunity of meeting Canadian and other members of non-governmental organizations serving in the Calcutta area and with officials of UNICEF and the Indian Red Cross.

On their return to Canada the team recommended to the Canadian Government that substantial new assistance was required. Consequently, the Government has decided to seek authority and funds from Parliament to bring the Canadian Government contribution up to Rs. 16.5 crores (\$22 million).

In making this announcement at the United Nations on November 18, Mr. Gerin-Lajoie spoke of the "enormous humanitarian problem which has been brought about by one of the largest, if not the largest, dislocations of mankind in modern history. The massive influx of millions of refugees from East Pakistan to neighbouring India within the short period of seven months has greatly increased tensions on the sub-continent."

"The Government and people of India have for their part responded magnificently to the challenge. Indeed, the brunt of the burden in main-

taining the refugees has fallen on them. Yet, as the number of refugees continues to grow, it is evident that even India's herculean efforts to provide food, shelter and medical care must be supplemented. The care of refugees has placed a serious burden on that country's limited resources and has threatened to undermine India's plans for its own social and economic development. The Government of India has already asked for international assistance to maintain the refugees until such time as they can return to their homes. Clearly, the international community has a responsibility to assist so that this immense tragedy may not be compounded.....

"The size of the problem, its nature, its urgency, and the consequences of failing to meet it are clear. What now must be made clear is the size, nature and timing of the international response."

Canada's contribution so far has amounted to Rs. 4.1 crores (\$6.6 million) of which over Rs. 1 crore has been raised through private donations. The new Canadian assistance which the Government is requesting from Parliament will amount to approximately Rs. 13 crores (\$18 million). A portion will be devoted to direct humanitarian relief channelled through the United Nations Focal Point. Part will be given to Canadian voluntary agencies engaged in relief operations and part will be provided in the form of goods and services directly to the Government of India.

Another effective form of assistance, in the Canadian view would be some kind of debt relief for India. "An easing of the current load of debt," Mr. Gerin-Lajoie said, "would make a particularly valuable contribution to offsetting the heavy burden placed on India's development programme by the diversion of development resources to refugee needs. Canada is prepared to participate with other donors in an early meeting to discuss levels and forms of assistance with particular reference to debt relief."

"To conclude," Mr. Gerin-Lajoie added, "Canada continues to ask that humanitarian efforts be accompanied both by restraint on the part of all concerned and by effective international efforts to reduce tensions in the area."

Summary of Canadian Contributions:

Canadian Government	\$22.00 million
Provincial Governments	\$.37 million
Combined Appeal	\$ 1.90 million
Total Canadian Contribution	<u>\$24.27 million</u>