

I should therefore like to rest the case for foreign aid essentially on the argument which I would put as follows. In the scale of things Canada is an affluent country. While per capita income may not be the only reliable indicator of a country's affluence, the fact remains that Canada is the country with the second highest per capita income in the world. As such, there can be no doubt that we have the resources both to cope with the problem of poverty in our midst and to play our appropriate part in a co-operative international approach to the problem of mitigating poverty in the developing countries. That argument seems to me an over-riding one if we believe that foreign aid is right as a matter of principle. It is to this aspect of the question of foreign aid that I should now like to turn.

The motives behind any foreign aid programme are likely to be mixed. These programmes have evolved pragmatically and the world setting in which they have evolved has itself been changing with unprecedented rapidity. Foreign aid is today part of the established pattern of international relations and it is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, there is merit, I think, in our stepping back from time to time to review the motives that have actuated our Canadian foreign aid programme and to consider afresh the purposes which we would expect it to serve.

For my own part, I have no hesitation in saying that I regard humanitarian considerations to be foremost in the minds of those who have supported and sustained the principle of Canadian aid to the developing countries. The humanitarian approach to foreign aid is itself compounded of a number of factors which defy separate analysis. In essence I would say it rests upon the recognition that, as flagrant disparities in human wealth and human welfare are no longer morally acceptable within a single community, whether it be local or national, the same principle is applicable to the larger world community. And as we have devised various mechanisms for transferring part of the wealth of the community to those segments which cannot rely on the laws of the market alone for their fair share, so foreign aid can be made to serve the same ends in a wider international framework. The validity of this approach to foreign aid was recognized in the Report of the Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects, of which the present Minister of Finance, the Honourable Walter Gordon, was Chairman. As that report -- published some seven years ago -- put it,

"... in a shrunken world the idea of humanity must have wider practical relevance. It may gradually become as unacceptable to the conscience of the West as it is now to the aspirations of the under-developed countries that there should be such gross disparities in human welfare throughout the world. In a remarkably short time the notion that such disparities cannot be tolerated within a single state has been accepted in almost all Western countries. To apply that principle throughout the world will be a much longer and harder task. But the issue has been raised and can hardly be wished away -- even if Canadians were so disposed, which we do not for a moment believe."