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PALESTINE REFUGEES

Text of a statement on November 25, 1954, by Mr. G.D. Weaver, M.P., Canadian Representative in the Ad Hoc Committee of the ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, on agenda item 18 - Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Note: The text of the resolution adopted by the Committee and the results of the voting are included at the end of the statement.

The Canadian Delegation has examined carefully the report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East as well as the special report issued by the Director and the Advisory Commission and we have now been able to study the draft resolution tabled by the delegations of France, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

I wish on behalf of my delegation to congratulate the Director and the staff of UNRWA on the way in which they have discharged their very difficult tasks resulting from this tragic problem. However, in expressing appreciation for the devoted efforts being made by UNRWA to alleviate the suffering and to bring about the rehabilitation of these unhappy refugees, we cannot fail to express our serious concern that little progress has been made towards "the re-integration of the refugees into the economic life of the Near East, either by repatriation or re-settlement" to use the words of the resolution on this subject passed at the fifth session of the General Assembly. Earlier hopes that there could be a steady decrease in the numbers of those requiring relief, as rehabilitation and re-settlement schemes progressed, are so far almost entirely unrealized, while, on the other hand, there is apparently no indication of progress with respect to repatriation of refugees to their homeland or compensation for their losses. The significance of this discouraging situation is not merely that high annual relief expenditures are still required; the failure to realize our hopes means that hundreds of thousands of persons, including a lamentably high proportion of young people, are still living unproductive and wretched lives.

Somehow and sometime a start must be made towards a real solution of this problem. It would certainly be useful if, for its part, the Government of Israel could advance some positive suggestions with a view to opening up opportunities for repatriation of those refugees who desire it, and if the Government of Israel could also make proposals regarding compensation for refugees. Such a move on the part of Israel would do much to create an atmosphere conducive to progress in this complex and difficult question.