

Supply—External Affairs

in India would be in excess of that which came from the Colombo plan. Indeed I am informed it is very much in excess.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The minister has mentioned the difficulties in connection with sending agricultural products as part of the contribution under the Colombo plan. Is it his considered opinion that the suggestions made by various farm organizations that assistance in this form—not by way of gifts, but actually by way of contributions under our allotment, or under the amount we intend to spend—would not be practicable? Would it be acceptable to India and other Asiatic countries?

Mr. McIlraith: Mr. Chairman, I hesitate to say much at this late hour on the subject. But I must say at once that I did appreciate the stand taken by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre in supporting the Colombo plan and its work, and the similar activities under other auspices.

It seems to me there is danger of two misconceptions in the minds of Canadians on this subject. One is the view that the mere addition of money would improve the situation. It is not as simple as that. What is required is, first of all, an appreciation of the problems, a sympathetic understanding of them and then help in such projects as require it.

When one considers the three Asiatic countries in the commonwealth who are in the Colombo plan it is rather extraordinary just how similar their problems are to some of the problems this country has come through in its history. It is not simply a matter of providing more money to each country and doing what is required; it is rather a problem of working out with them what particular phase of development work is required and then helping them to go forward with the development they are undertaking. It is a question of helping them with those projects that are designed to develop their own economy, and making a positive contribution to their own capacity to produce more for their people.

Mr. Macdonnell: Can the hon. member give us an illustration?

Mr. McIlraith: Yes. A good illustration is that in some parts of those countries the problem arises, curiously enough, from the same rivers causing flood damage and then drought occurring in the immediate area. That seems rather strange in North America, but that is the way it is. What is required there is assistance to them in constructing the dams to control the flooding and then

[Mr. Pearson.]

taking electric power off, if that is feasible, and at the same time developing the irrigation works so that the land will be made productive. Incidentally, I hope some of our western friends will not misunderstand me if I say that it is just possible that some of our people could learn a little about irrigation from the East.

Mr. Knowles: Are you speaking to the members of the cabinet?

Mr. McIlraith: That is the type of problem that arises. It is a matter of assisting those projects.

Mr. Diefenbaker: You should whisper that to the Prime Minister and teach him something about irrigation. That would be a good place to start.

Mr. McIlraith: I am speaking of those projects about which the hon. member for Greenwood inquired. When the authorities there feel that they are able to undertake projects it is a matter of assisting them in the development of those projects.

There is a very good project going on in West Pakistan. The problem there in irrigation is that you must not put too much water in the soil, because if you raise the water table, curiously enough, you destroy the productivity of the land, because there is salt in the sub-soil and you bring the salt to the surface and nothing will grow. Therefore the irrigation must be done as a surface proposition rather than by raising the water table. Not only that, but when you construct the irrigation canals they must be lined; otherwise the water simply disappears in the canal and the whole flow of the river would disappear very quickly. Not only would it disappear and the water be lost but you would destroy the land by raising the salt when you raise the water table.

What we have done there is to create a cement plant in that area to provide cement for the construction of the dams for the control of the flooding and creation of electric power, to line the beds of the irrigation canals, and for the construction of houses in the land settlement scheme on the land that is made productive by reason of the irrigation.

Hon. members will see that for that particular project what was required was the cement facility. A different form of help is required in the different countries and for the different projects brought forward. I merely mentioned this one project by way of illustration because I thought it was a good one. A much smaller thing in Ceylon is the experimental work being done in the fishing