

External assistance, although marginal in size, can thus have an important and even decisive impact on the development process at particular stages and points of time in each country. For this reason, it is important that development assistance be carefully integrated into the development strategy of each developing country so that it will support the objectives of the society to which it is directed.

The massive transfer of resources from the wealthy nations to the war-torn and less-developed countries in the post-war years represented a historical breakthrough in the behaviour of nations. It is true, of course, that part of the motivation for the transfer of resources at that time was the desire to strengthen the Western alliance. But it was also true that much of the support for the programme was based on a genuine feeling of obligation both to those countries that had suffered war damage and to the new nations emerging from colonialism. The translation of this sense of obligation into a massive nation-to-nation flow of financial assistance represented a genuinely new phase in the relationship between nations.

Today there are signs that the will behind this transfer of resources is weakening in some of the major donor countries. Part of the change undoubtedly represents a decline in the strength of some of the original political motivations for the transfer of resources. But the problem of widespread poverty remains as one of the principal challenges to the equilibrium of the world. International co-operation in the post-war period has created a considerable momentum in the drive to reduce world poverty, and if this momentum is lost there could be a significant impairment in the relationships between the more-industrialized and the less-developed nations of the world with serious, perhaps tragic, consequences for world peace and order.

There is still the question of why the eradication of poverty in developing countries should be given priority by Canada.

One basic value of Canadian society is the importance of the individual person, and of his rights and welfare. This value has a long heritage in our culture; it can be traced from one of the central tenets of the Greco-Judeo-Christian ethic. During medieval and early modern times, this ethic was adopted and translated into the legal and political systems which Canada has inherited. Those systems, imperfect though they may be in practice, are based on the tenet that all individuals in a society have both rights and obligations toward other citizens in that society, because the potential of that society cannot be realized unless the potential of each of its members is also realized. It is the basic assumption on which a democratic system rests.