

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

I think the Canadian government should adopt this attitude at the United Nations and make it clear that on the request of governments which desire to have information and birth control devices we are ready to help any plans which might be put forward. There should be no attempt to press Canadian participation where help has not been requested. For example, UNICEF has now decided to defer action on family planning until next year, but it has given the go-ahead signal to its officials to consider limited family planning assistance at the request of governments. I think it would help a great deal if the Canadian government were to declare its readiness to work through United Nations agencies to help solve problems of family planning and population control when requested by the governments concerned. We should do this through our foreign aid program.

Should we not do so, an unfortunate situation might well arise. Desirous as they are of giving external aid to underdeveloped countries, the people of Canada might well conclude, if they see the world population expanding faster than food production and economic development, that sending aid to these countries is like pouring water through a sieve. They might well be tempted to say: We shall not continue, unless we see there is a sound relationship between the resources available to a country and the population they are able to look after and feed properly. Thus, in the interest of building these countries on a sound economic and social foundation we should take this further step in external aid and stand ready to help in the work of population planning and control as requested by the governments of underdeveloped countries throughout the world.

• (10:20 p.m.)

Mr. D. S. Macdonald (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): To round out what has been said by the hon. lady, I would add that between the 1962 and 1965 resolutions Canada was not called upon to vote or express an opinion on this question. However, as the hon. lady has said, in the spring of 1965, Canada, along with other members of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations approved a resolution permitting the United Nations to meet requests from developing countries for assistance in the field of population control. As a consequence of this the United Nations through its assistance program, to which Canada is contributing, has given technical aid to India on population problems.

Therefore it can be said in a multilateral sense that the advice of the hon. lady has already been enacted in policy and that Canada, by her participation through the United Nations, has contributed to attempt to solve the population problems in countries which request this assistance. To the present time Canada has not received any request on a bilateral basis for any specific forms of assistance of this kind from any country.

The policy of the Canadian foreign aid program is to respond only to specific requests from the countries concerned, and of course there could be no question on our part of making a condition of any other aid that these practices be followed and that Canada's advice be taken in this regard. Therefore I think the first principle to be followed here is that we should act only in response to specific requests from the countries concerned. To the extent that a request has been sought through the United Nations agency, Canada, through her participation in the United Nations, has contributed.

Motion agreed to and the house adjourned at 10.24 p.m.