

Slow Progress

It must be admitted that progress in this matter has thus far been slow and to us in Canada, and no doubt even more so to the food-deficit countries, disappointing. On a number of occasions in recent years, the Prime Minister of Canada has urged that specific programmes be established to make available surplus foodstuffs for consumption in those parts of the world where food shortages occur. As far back as December 1957, Prime Minister Diefenbaker, speaking in Paris, referring to the needs of hungry peoples, stated that: "The conscience of the free world will not accept a situation where half mankind is well fed and the other half is starved". He advocated the establishment by some of the more fortunate countries of something in the nature of a food bank whereby food would be made available for distribution among those countries that were struggling for economic advance but which were held back by low or inadequate nutritional levels among their populations.

At the opening session of the Food-for-Peace Conference held in Washington in May 1959, the Canadian Minister of Trade and Commerce expressed Canada's hearty support for the humanitarian objectives of the President of the United States in his proposals to Congress for the more effective use of surplus food supplies in the interests of peace and he recalled Prime Minister Diefenbaker's many previous suggestions for international action to alleviate distress and to promote economic development in less fortunate countries of the world. At the last session of the FAO Assembly in October 1959, the Canadian views on this subject were once more put forward. The Canadian Minister of Agriculture, referring to the challenge of surpluses and hunger continuing side by side, urged member countries to encourage and assist multilateral action whenever possible.

Role of FAO

My Delegation recognizes that the draft before you is open to improvement and I would emphasize that we are deeply interested in the views of other delegations on the issues raised in that resolution. For our part, we would earnestly hope that the FAO, in its study of the feasibility and acceptability of new arrangements for mobilizing and distributing available surplus foodstuffs in areas of greatest need, will find it possible to recommend for this purpose the establishment of a UN food bank which would be supported by all member countries on an equitable financial basis. As Prime Minister Diefenbaker said on September 26: "A few countries cannot underwrite the costs of transferring their surpluses to countries in need. What we need is to join in contributing to a solution of truly world-wide scope to this problem." Canada would of course expect that any food bank that might be established as a result of the FAO's study would be both realistic and workable. We fully agreed with the distinguished representative of Argentina when, on October 18, he said that any international arrangements established for the disposal of surplus agricultural commodities must avoid damage to legitimate and normal commercial trade. Our own trade has in the