

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
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No. 60/4 PLEDGES OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNRWA AND THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMMES DURING
WORLD REFUGEE YEAR

A Statement by Mr. W.B. Nesbitt, Vice-Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, in the General Assembly of the United Nations on Thursday, December 10, 1959.

. . . Although circumstances have led to the holding of the pledging conference for the two refugee programmes at a very late date, it is still one of the most important occasions which take place during the course of the General Assembly. The United Nations has set up agencies to deal with the refugee questions which are a legacy of the political turmoil of our time. My Delegation has always laid great emphasis on the necessity of strong and widespread support for these extra-budgetary agencies set up to deal with these great humanitarian problems. We may have our differences on political issues but on one matter most of the members of this organization are agreed - it is one of the fundamental duties of an international organization such as ours to make adequate and effective provision for those members of the human community who for one reason or another have been denied the right of a homeland.

Since the very beginning of United Nations' action for refugees, the Government of Canada has demonstrated effectively its interest in and sympathy for the refugee. We are a large country in the process of development. We have over the years taken in tens of thousands of refugees and welcomed them as participants in the building of our country. We have also over the years contributed -- I think I can say generously -- to the international programmes for the care of refugees waiting their turn to take up once again the duties and the privileges of full membership in a national community.

For the year 1960 the Government of Canada has approved a recommendation that Parliamentary approval be sought for a contribution of \$500,000 Canadian for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees. This figure is the same as that for 1959. At the same time, the

Canadian Government approved a contribution of \$290,000 Canadian, subject to Parliamentary approval, to the programmes of the High Commissioner for Refugees. The decision to continue its contribution at the increased level of \$290,000 Canadian to the High Commissioner's programmes signifies the interest of the Canadian Government in maintaining the accelerated camp-clearance programme of the High Commissioner. In addition to these two pledges, the Government has also signified its intention to ask Parliament for a further \$60,000 Canadian for the Inter-governmental Committee for European Migration for the purpose of assisting this organization, which works closely with the High Commissioner for Refugees, in its Far Eastern operation of assistance to refugees of European origin who are allowed to leave mainland China.

The Government of Canada welcomed the United Nations decision to designate June 1959 to June 1960 as World Refugee Year. Early this year the Canadian Government announced a special contribution of \$1.5 million worth of flour to the Palestine refugee agency as a token of its intention to participate in World Refugee Year. During the first days of this Assembly, the Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada announced that the Canadian Government intended to make a special contribution during this year by waiving normal immigration requirements and admitting to Canada a substantial number of tubercular refugees and their families. For this programme the Canadian Government has already set aside the sum of \$750,000 for the initial year of the programme, and is also aware that there will be substantial expenditures in succeeding years before these families are completely rehabilitated. The Government of Canada intends to bear the costs of this programme together with provincial governments and voluntary organizations which may wish to participate in the programme, until all of the hundred tubercular refugees and their families are integrated into the national life of our country. The first group to be admitted under this special programme will arrive in Toronto on December 16, and a second group is expected to arrive on Christmas Eve.

The resolution designating World Refugee Year stressed that each country should determine its own way of participating in World Refugee Year. When the terms of the resolution were made known in Canada, the voluntary non-governmental organizations traditionally interested in refugees came together and formed the Canadian Committee for World Refugee Year. This organization was set up to co-ordinate the activities of close to forty national voluntary agencies in Canada. The Committee is organizing a national campaign for funds and hopes to make substantial contributions toward such refugee programmes as camp clearance in Europe, technical and vocational training for Arab refugees from Palestine, medical and other assistance to Chinese refugees in Hong Kong and the

relocation of refugees of European origin in China. Many Canadian cities have set themselves important targets for their contribution to World Refugee Year. I might cite some of them: Montreal has set itself a goal of \$400,000, Toronto \$325,000, Winnipeg \$200,000, Vancouver \$200,000. These are just examples. Some Canadian cities have adopted specific refugee camps which they hope to clear by their contribution during World Refugee Year. The Canadian Committee for World Refugee Year is hopeful that voluntary contributions from the Canadian public will be substantial.

Thus, the people and Government of Canada are making special efforts during World Refugee Year over and above those which Canada has traditionally rendered. We in Canada have always regarded the refugee not as an object of pity but as a potential contributor to the development of the wealth and culture of our country. For this reason we have in the past welcomed a large number of refugees who have now become Canadian citizens and full participants in the adventure of our national development.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate the belief of my country that one of the fundamental tasks of the United Nations is the protection and care of those who have no recourse but to this international organization, which represents the highest aspirations of the world community....

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