



Canadian Statement in Third Committee,
November 30, 1965,
by Professor R. St.J. Macdonald

Mr. Chairman,

It is with pleasure and a sense of honour that the Canadian delegation now introduces the resolution contained in document L.1310.

As a member of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme for Refugees we have always admired the work of the High Commissioner. Though we are mindful of the fact that primary and continuing responsibility for coping with the refugee problem rests with the host state, we have always regarded the High Commissioner as a catalyst, as indeed he regards himself, and it is with this in mind that we not only welcome him but also congratulate him upon the excellent work described in his report.

There is something especially poignant about the position of the refugee, Mr. Chairman; and in this connection I will do no more than quote the words of Mr. Mohammed Sahnoun, Deputy Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity. Speaking to the 13th Session of the Executive Board, he described as "shameful" and "immoral" the situation which arises "when a man, fleeing from natural or political disaster, finds himself confronting other men, and is told that he is not wanted".

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Turning to the High Commissioner's report, Mr. Chairman, it is evident that the work to be done is two-fold: first there is the matter of assistance to refugees themselves; and, secondly, there is the question of protecting them as a group within the receiving state. As far as assistance goes, who among us will deny that the response must be immediate? To the refugee, his situation is not merely a "problem", but a day by day, if not an hour by hour, fact of life. Assistance may will mean the difference between life and death. It is clear therefore that when appeals for assistance are made to the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees that Office must be able to coordinate a rapid and meaningful response without serious shortages or inadequacies intervening. This will not be possible, however, if provision is not made for the new rise in the number of refugees, both in Europe and Africa, referred to by Mr. Schnyder a few moments ago.

But the problem by no means ends with the provision of primary assistance. This indeed is the major task of the High Commissioner, but the question is wider. Whether the refugee eventually returns to his native country, or whether he remains a stranger within the gate, he must be placed in a position where he can make his own contribution, not just to his subsistence, but to that ascending standard of dignity and well being to which we would all

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agree he is entitled. He must be able to look forward to an active and positive role while he remains in the host state. Here too the increasing incidence of refugee problems, with its added burden on the facilities of the host countries and the specialized agencies, calls for greater mobilization of resources and improved co-ordination, if only to maintain present levels of services.

Mr. Chairman, the High Commissioner has spoken to us today about the fundamental changes which have been taking place in the activities of his office, changes which have been dictated by the extraordinary demands of a dynamic situation. He has described eloquently and clearly, if I may say so, what these changes are, and it is sufficient for the Canadian delegation to say that the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees must be given such financial flexibility as will allow it to adapt to new requirements and new situations as they arise.

It is with these thoughts in mind, Mr. Chairman, that we take particular pride in co-sponsoring the resolution before us today. This resolution is sponsored by the following powers: Algeria, Canada, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Greece, Iran, Senegal, Tunisia, United Republic of Tanzania and Venezuela. It seeks to do three things. First, it notes the increasingly universal character of refugee problems, both from the point of view

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of the moral responsibility involved, and from the point of view of tangibly and practically involving a larger number of states in refugee and relief programmes. Secondly, it recognizes the work being done by the High Commissioner for Refugees and it requests him to continue his humanitarian efforts to assist in finding permanent solutions: to continue the work which he has himself stressed of inducing and coordinating greater efforts by the states themselves, which are of course the principal agents in the matter. Finally, and this we believe to be very important, it invites states members and members of the specialized agencies to increase their support so that the High Commissioner's Office will be able to continue its work and react to new demands being placed on it.

In this connection, I would like to recall that the High Commissioner has told us that his aid budget for 1965 shows a deficit of over \$500,000.00 and that next year this figure may reach the level of \$1 million, unless assistance is forthcoming. It is this situation which has led my government to increase by \$55,000.00 United States dollars our total annual contribution, which has now reached a level of \$325,000.00 United States dollars. I mention this, Mr. Chairman, not because we are looking for kudos - that has nothing to do with it - but because the increase emphasizes the serious concern with which we regard the financial difficulties in which the office of the High Commissioner finds itself.

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We believe, Mr. Chairman, that the resolution now before the House will attract the support of all members of the United Nations family, and of the Third Committee in particular. In recognizing the essentially non-political character of the work for refugees, it reminds us of the profoundly tragic nature of the problem. We would therefore invite every delegation to give this resolution the thorough appraisal and unanimous support which we believe it deserves.

I would close, Sir, by expressing our gratitude to Mr. Schnyder for the magnificent contribution he has made to the United Nations and to the world community in particular. When the time comes to write the history of the refugee problem his efforts will bulk even larger than they are now seen to be. We thank him and we wish him every happiness and satisfaction in the new responsibilities that lie ahead of him.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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