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UNRWA

(United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East)

Text of Statement to be made in the Special Political Committee by the Canadian Representative Mr. Paul Beaulieu, on Monday, November 1, 1965.

The Canadian Delegation has studied with all due care the reports of the UNRWA Commissioner General describing the Agency's activities over the past two years. We have also listened carefully to the statements and comments made by other delegations since debate on this important item began. First of all I would like to express the admiration of my government towards the real devotion which the Commissioner General and the Agency's staff have shown in the accomplishment of the difficult tasks which devolve upon them. I take pleasure in congratulating Mr. Michelmore on the very lucid review he has presented to us on the present situation of the agency.

One point which seems to elicit a unanimity of views within the committee is the humanitarian aspect of UNRWA's activities. It is not surprising that differences of opinion exist as to the most satisfactory method of alleviating the fate of the refugees. Nevertheless my Delegation believes that these differences should not obscure the duty which devolves on the international community,

namely, to facilitate the task of the agency set up by the United Nations to assist these refugees. It is this perspective that the following remarks should be interpreted.

Since 1950 Canada, through her Government and private organizations, has not failed to support the Agency unsparingly,, both by governmental contributions in commodities and funds and by voluntary contributions from philanthropic groups. We hope these various kinds of assistance have contributed in some measure -- and this is our essential aim -- to the needs of the refugees in the fields of food, health and education. Regarding the professional training of young refugees, the Canadian Government is happy to have been able to participate during the World Refugee Year in the establishment of the training centre at Siblin, which like other centres run by the Agency, provides instruction and training to at least a part of the present generation of Palestinian refugees without which they could not assist their community. Canada is happy to join its efforts to those of other governments who have provided equipment for these schools, assisted in their construction, or made scholarships available for their graduates.

I turn now to the future, and shall deal with two points raised in the Commissioner General's report: the financing of UNRWA activities and the renewal of its mandate.

Regarding the financial state of the organization, Mr. Michelmore has stressed the seriousness of the situation and pointed out the grave consequences for UNRWA's humanitarian work with the refugees and the unfavourable repercussions affecting the peace and stability of the Middle-East should this situation not be improved. The Commissioner General has indicated a certain number of measures which have been taken to effect budgetary savings. However, it has become quite clear that these steps alone are inadequate. Up to now the financial burden has been shared by a certain number of countries which over the years have regularly contributed to the Agency's budget. We feel obliged to acknowledge here the exceptionally generous nature of the contributions provided to the Agency by the United States and Great Britain. In addition to these contributions and to those of other donors, the highly important contributions of various kinds provided by the host countries should be mentioned. We should also note the participation of international organizations, namely UNESCO and WHO. No less important cooperation is afforded by several private organizations.

The Canadian Government has duly noted the comments of the Commissioner General concerning the present financial situation of the Agency, and in the light of these observations and conscious of the appeal of Mr. Michelmore, will examine in a constructive spirit the question of its contribution.

The second issue concerns the renewal of UNRWA's mandate. As you are aware, the present mandate, which was renewed for one year only, will expire June 30, 1966. The Commissioner General in his report stresses the need for a longer mandate if he is to organize his programme of activities on a stable and economic basis. The Canadian Government agrees with the principle that a longer mandate, perhaps of three years, would greatly facilitate the organization of the Agency's work. My government will give it all the attention it deserves while keeping in mind, of course, other proposals submitted in this debate.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, allow me to quote the last paragraph of the text of the inscription on the plaque which was unveiled during the inaugural ceremony of the Vocational Training Centre at Siblin in 1962 for it expresses better than I could, not only the motives which inspired my statement, but also the fact that international cooperation, far from being a hollow term, constitutes a constructive reality:

> "This inscription bears witness to the hope that cooperation and brotherhood between nations will continue to flourish and to faith that within these walls will be trained young men who will bring joy and pride to their families and by their devoted labour help to enrich the Arab world and all humanity."

Mr. Chairman, the inscription at the Vocational Training Centre at Siblin eloquently demonstrates that, in the search for a solution to the problem which faces us, if good will between nations exists and the desire for the brotherhood of man prevails, the cooperation between governments and private organizations permits us to envisage substantial progress towards assuring the well-being of the Palestine refugees. It is in this spirit that my Delegation proposes to follow the debate of our committee.