

No. 62/9

Statement by Miss Helen Marsh,
Canadian Delegate - Third Committee, United Nations,

October 19, 1962.

Mr. Chairman,

Chapters VIII and IX of the report of the Economic and Social Council, which have been assigned to this Committee, contain substantial food for thought. Some sections of this report will be examined later by this Committee under separate items of our agenda. Since detailed comments on the remaining sections would require considerable time, I propose at this time to offer the views of my Delegation only on those aspects of the United Nations work in the social field which are of particular interest to my Government.

Along with the Delegations of Afghanistan, Denmark, Morocco, Thailand and Yugoslavia, we have tabled the draft resolution contained in Document A/C3/L995. I should like to explain briefly why my Delegation believes this resolution to be important.

The 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs represents many years of careful and patient work by experts in the field of international narcotic control and it reflects their experience in this complicated area. Some 73 countries took part in the conference which drafted this Convention and 64 of those countries have signed it. It must therefore be considered as representing a large measure of common agreement.

Canada was not only an active participant at the conference which produced this Convention, but was also the first country to ratify it. To come into force the Convention requires ratification by 40 countries. The purpose of the resolution which has been tabled is to bring to the attention of the countries which have not yet ratified the Convention the desirability of doing so in the near future.

Some countries have expressed fears that upon coming into force, the Convention would destroy the international control system which has been laboriously developed over the last 50 years. The Canadian Government does not share these fears. On the contrary, we believe that to be effective international control must reflect the agreement of the largest possible number of countries.

We also believe that the Single Convention represents this kind of agreement -- and that its coming into force will represent a further advance in international control by covering narcotic substances and other matters not wholly dealt with under the existing nine multilateral treaties. The Convention will replace these treaties and thus will provide not only for codification but will also further the cause of international controls as regards narcotic drugs.

Another draft resolution which my Delegation has co-sponsored is contained in Document A/C3/L991, Revision 1. Its purpose is to ensure that the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will receive the attention it deserves. My country attaches great importance to the Declaration and believes that December 10, 1948, will remain a milestone in the history of the United Nations and of mankind.

In Canada, consideration of the broad subject of human rights is emphasized throughout the year by a number of public celebrations. For instance, we celebrate Brotherhood Week, Citizenship Day, United Nations Day, World Services Day and International Day. But each year, on the tenth of December, the attention of all Canadians is focussed on the ideals and the norms which emerge from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Similarly, the impact which the Declaration has had on national legislations all over the world, and more especially in Canada through the promulgation of the Bill of Rights, is stressed. This explains, I believe, the Canadian Government's interest in ensuring that the fifteenth anniversary will be suitably observed. And I can assure you that Canada will co-operate both in the international field and at home to ensure a worthy commemoration.

My Delegation believes that a small and compact special committee to be appointed by the Secretary-General could make a useful and effective contribution. In consultation with the appropriate organizations it could prepare plans and suggestions for publicizing the Declaration and thus provide substantial assistance to all Member States but especially to those new members of our organization who did not receive the material distributed on the occasion of the tenth anniversary.

As for the amendments to the resolution tabled by the U.S.S.R. Delegation, I reserve the right of my Delegation to comment on these when they are being considered by the Committee.

In turning to other problems in the social field, I should like to express my appreciation for the very lucid comments made by Dr. Tabibi on recent developments in the work of UNICEF, and by Miss Henderson on the current projects of the Bureau of Social Affairs.

On the general subject of balanced social and economic development, my Delegation believes that the last report on the world social situation has contributed materially to a better understanding of the problems involved.

It seems to my Delegation that the pressing needs of developing countries with limited resources can best be met by strengthening the technical machinery for planning and by co-ordinating the planning efforts of international agencies in the programmes which they carry out in co-operation with these governments.

The basic difficulty, of course, is that the concept of balanced development cannot at present be translated into precise quantitative terms. This difficulty is particularly true of countries with limited resources. It is not easy to measure economic and social assets in comparable terms since development in the social sector cannot be translated into monetary terms.

The task of the Social Commission remains to see what steps could be taken to improve our understanding of social development. It is fairly clear from the studies already produced that there can be no standard formula and the case studies are therefore extremely valuable in contributing to the finding of certain general criteria, even though they may be limited in scope to certain sectors like housing or education. A good deal of attention should be directed towards the key indicators and time ought not to be wasted on surveys when it is already obvious that their conclusions could not be carried out for lack of resources.

In this connection my Delegation is pleased to learn of the proposals of the Netherlands Government concerning the establishment of a United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. We shall await with great interest the report which the Secretary-General is expected to present shortly, outlining some of the details regarding this project.

The report of the ad hoc group on housing and urban development recommending the creation of a United Nations committee on housing is its most comprehensive piece of work. We attach particular interest to its emphasis on the usefulness of creating in every country a national agency for housing which could be used as a point of contact for international assistance.

My Delegation also welcomes the idea of convening a meeting of an ad hoc group of experts on community development, which will contribute to strengthening the United Nations programme in that field, as part of the Development Decade.

As suggested by the group of experts on social and welfare programmes, the importance of active citizen participation in the welfare field at all levels cannot be overlooked.

Within the framework of national planning there is room not only for large programmes involving extensive use of resources, but also for smaller and sometimes quite modest projects which can, and often do, have a value out of all proportion to their physical size. There is some danger that very large undertakings, if they are put into effect in the wrong place and at the wrong time, may collapse from their own weight, whereas small projects, carefully developed, can frequently be expanded stage by stage into broad programmes benefiting wide segments of the population. Whatever the approach, we feel that a cardinal rule is that no endeavour can ultimately succeed unless it is firmly rooted among the people; it must be understood by them, it must be seen to benefit them and they must be actively involved in moving it forward.

It is the view of my Delegation that a satisfactory balance must be found between the social and economic sectors as part of the United Nations development decade. We feel that the Secretariat should be given full latitude to re-adjust programmes and priorities in compliance with plans of action outlined by the Economic and Social Council.

My Delegation is therefore gratified at the important re-orientation of UNICEF policy which has recently taken place. The so-called "new look" provides a good illustration of the flexibility with which the United Nations has been able to adapt itself to changing needs and circumstances. The Canadian Delegation finds itself in broad agreement with this new UNICEF trend and particularly approves the diversification of UNICEF policies with programmes aimed particularly at child and family welfare.

We also feel that UNICEF has shown a praiseworthy appreciation of the desirability of a universal approach to meeting the needs of children at the national level and that it has displayed an equally commendable consciousness of the dangers of over-ambitious planning. My Delegation agrees with UNICEF's excellent principles of planning, in meeting the needs of children.

The needs of children and youth living in urban slums are indeed immense and require urgent attention. In fact, these needs will tend to become even greater in the future in view of the rapidly increasing rate of urbanization coupled with substantial over-all population growth. We are glad to see that UNICEF has extended its work into this vital field.

My Delegation is also pleased to note the increased co-operation of UNICEF with the regional economic commissions, the new economic development institutes and such other United Nations agencies as the Special Fund and the World Bank. My Government has consistently favoured the development of close co-operation and co-ordination between the United Nations organs working in related fields. We would anticipate, however, that, if UNICEF is to advise other United Nations bodies on questions of planning related to children, or provide them with assistance in such forms as fellowships or

consultant services, it will do so in response to specific requests from the individual organizations concerned. We have no doubt that if UNICEF's willingness to provide advice and assistance is made known, such requests will be forthcoming.

One of the features of some of the existing bilateral programmes is their tendency to favour very large projects at the expense of the smaller type of undertaking. There may even develop a sort of competition for such large projects, with the result that special effort is required to ensure that assistance is forthcoming to meet less spectacular but equally urgent needs. In situations where bilateral or multinational assistance cannot be obtained for small but vital projects, an internationally based organization such as UNICEF is often the only source of aid to which a government can turn in its difficulties.

As I mentioned before, Mr. Chairman, I have not given the views of my Delegation on all the problems now before us. I expect, therefore, to have to intervene again at a later date when these problems are discussed in detail.



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