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OF THE UNITED NATIONS: REPORT OF ECOSOC

Statement by Mrs. Harry S. Quart, M.B.E., Canadian Representative  
on the Third Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee of the  
United Nations General Assembly, October 1, 1957.

... Mr. Chairman, since Canada has been a member of  
the Economic and Social Council during the past two years and  
has therefore had the opportunity to participate actively in  
the formulation of policies and programmes for the United  
Nations in the social and human rights fields, it will not be  
necessary for me to say very much in detail about those pro-  
grammes. I should, nevertheless, like to comment on a few of  
the subjects which are covered by the report.

I turn first to Chapter VI which deals with social  
questions. At the 24th Session of the Council we listened to,  
and participated in, a lively and extensive debate on the World  
Social Situation. For its consideration under that item the  
Council had before it a very large number of reports of  
exceptionally high standard. Among those many documents there  
was the report of the Social Commission covering its eleventh  
session, a report by a Working Group on the Maintenance of  
Family Levels of Living, (the Chairman of which, by the way,  
was a Canadian, Dr. Davidson, the Deputy Minister of Welfare),  
as well as a report by the Secretary-General on concepts and  
principles of community development, a subject to which this  
Committee devoted considerable attention last year.

At the center of its discussion the Council had a  
report on the World Social Situation. That report covered  
the period since 1952 when the Council had considered a  
preliminary report which had portrayed a period of struggle  
to recover from the social dislocation and poverty caused by  
the Second World War. As the Secretary-General said in  
introducing the debate in the Council, the new report covered  
years which had not been ideally peaceful or secure, but  
during which people in most parts of the world had nevertheless  
had a better chance of enjoying the fruits of their own labour,  
and governments had been able with international assistance to  
devote more thought and greater resources to the promotion of  
social and economic progress. Some measurable gains had been  
made in social conditions but there were nevertheless some  
ominous trends and unsolved problems which were very significant.  
Among those problems the Secretary-General cited the unpre-  
cedented growth of world population and the problems raised by  
the rapid movement of rural populations into cities unprepared  
to receive them.

In the debate which followed there was a common  
recognition of the inter-dependence of social and economic  
progress. There was also wide recognition of the necessity  
for well-conceived policies to meet the problems of rapid  
urbanization. I think it might be said that one of the most  
significant things which emerged from the report on the World  
Social Situation and its discussion in the Council was not so  
much the description of the progress which had been made in  
the world in social betterment in recent years, but in the  
evidence which the report provided that progress can in fact  
be made. To ensure continuation of that progress it is

essential, but not sufficient, that there be continued effort at the national level, and international support and reinforcement of that national effort in those areas which are appropriate for international action. Important as national effort and international support are, they can be of little avail by themselves unless a third condition is met, that is the creation and preservation of an international climate in which individual, national and international efforts can increasingly be devoted to the achievement of social progress in an expanding economy and in a world at peace. The range of problems to be solved is immense and the possible avenues of approach to their solution are infinite. It is by an exchange of ideas and experience in a forum such as this and through the machinery which the United Nations provides that one may expect to isolate those areas for which national and international action hold out the greatest promise of success. Some of these areas were discussed in detail by the Social Commission and by the Council during the past year.

I think that, building on the experimental work of recent years, we have now reached the stage where we are in a position to plan a well-balanced programme of international action to deal with many of the problems reflected in the report on the World Social Situation. A very large number of reports and studies dealing with these problems are now being prepared, or planned, for the consideration of the Social Commission and the Council. In due course, therefore, by virtue of its consideration of the report of the Economic and Social Council, the members of this Committee will have an opportunity to discuss these matters and to express the views of their respective governments.

In none of these fields is it more important for the views and experiences of member countries to be known than in the field of community development. At the last session of the General Assembly there was an interesting discussion of this question in the Third Committee which was followed by consideration in the Social Commission and the Council of an excellent report by the Secretary-General on concepts and principles of community development and recommendations on further practical measures to be taken by international organizations. It is still true that we are not in complete agreement as to what we mean when we talk about the concept of community development; the term means different things to different peoples. However, the differences which remain are more in shades of meaning than in basic understanding and we are confident that patient exploration will ultimately produce a widely acceptable definition. The concept of community development, as the Canadian Delegation understands it, is completely worthy of support and encouragement. There is immense potentiality for social progress in soundly-conceived programmes which draw upon the initiative and capacity for self-help of the people themselves.

We are convinced that in the encouragement of community development programmes there is an appropriate field for international action and support. At the present stage, at least, the kinds of activity which are appropriate for international co-operative action, and which have been recommended, are essentially of an advisory or technical assistance nature. The development of national programmes, with international support and advice where appropriate, will be watched with great interest by the Canadian Delegation since the techniques which are being developed may well be applicable not only to the situations which exist in the underdeveloped countries but also to some of the social problems with which my own country is faced.

Turning to Section II of Chapter VI of the report of ECOSOC, which deals with the work of the Population Commission, I should merely like to comment on the fact that the report of that Commission to the Council proved to be one of the least controversial items on the agenda of the twenty-third Session. The important problems with which the Commission deals are considered in a businesslike fashion by a group of hard-working members, many of whom are experts in this very technical field. My country has had the honour to be represented on that Commission for several years and will continue to give it the support which it should have.

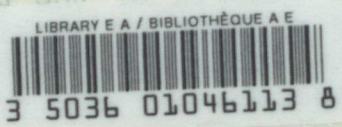
We have already had a useful discussion on Section III of the Chapter, which deals with UNICEF, and we shall later in the Session be dealing specifically with two items on our agenda relating to the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The only remaining section of Chapter VI to be mentioned, therefore, is Section V which is devoted to the international control of narcotic drugs. On this subject, which is so important to the social and economic betterment of mankind, it is not necessary for me to say very much, since Canada has been represented on the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for many years and has played an active part there and elsewhere in the development of co-operative international action for the control of the use of narcotics, which may be either a boon or a curse to mankind. We shall continue to do whatever we can to assist in the achievement of the objectives of the Commission.

Mr. Chairman, I should now like to turn briefly to one or two of the questions covered by Chapter VII of the report of the Council. The programme of action in the field of human rights, which encompasses the programme of periodic reports and special studies, as well as the programme of advisory services in the field of human rights, is still in its experimental stages and very little need be said about it at this stage. The first of a series of periodic reports, covering the periods 1954 to 1956, are due from Governments now and the responsible authorities in Canada have been actively engaged during recent months in the preparation of suitable material for submission to the Secretary-General. The Canadian Government some time ago submitted material to be used in connection with the first of the series of special studies on specific rights or groups of rights, that is, the one on freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention and exile. We look forward with interest to the results of the Human Rights Commission's consideration of all of the material which will have been made available by member governments in connection with these reports and studies.

In connection with the programme of advisory services in the field of human rights, I have read with interest the report which has been circulated by the Secretary-General in Document A/C3/L609 concerning the seminar on Civic Responsibilities and Increased Participation of Asian Women in Public Life which was held in Bangkok from the 5th to the 16th of August, 1957. It seems to my Delegation that the results of this first seminar under the programme have been sufficiently interesting and promising to justify consideration of other seminars in the future conducted on similar lines. The experience gained in Bangkok should be of assistance to the Secretariat and others concerned in the planning of other even more successful seminars in the future.

A considerable amount of the time of the Commission on Human Rights at its last Session, and of the Council at its 24th Session was taken up with discussion of plans for the observance next year of the Tenth Anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Very comprehensive plans were produced, the full implications of which were not clear a month or so ago when the matter was considered by the Council. Those plans were approved in principle at that time and a committee was set up to co-operate with the Secretary-General in making the necessary arrangements to give effect to the various recommendations of the Commission. The Canadian Delegation will be interested to learn in due course what concrete plans have been made on the basis of the recommendations which were considered earlier.

With regard to the important work of the Commission on the Status of Women, all I wish to say now is that the Canadian Government looks forward to a useful and interesting term of office on the Commission, to which it was elected earlier this year.



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