

No. 54/9

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Statement on technical assistance made in the House of Commons on February 10, 1954, by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L. B. Pearson.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in the discussion of this resolution; and I am also grateful, as I am sure the House is, to the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. MacInnis) for making that possible.

After all, this resolution deals with a subject the long-range importance of which may well be very great indeed for international co-operation, and indeed for international peace. Because, though history does not prove that a nation consisting of people with full stomachs is necessarily a peaceful nation, certainly history does prove that a nation consisting of people with empty stomachs will be a troublesome one.

This purpose of United Nations technical assistance, is to improve material conditions in what, sometimes a little glibly, we call the under-developed countries of the world. I always like to use the expression "materially under-developed" when referring to these countries because, in some ways, they are quite as highly developed as we are.

I agree wholeheartedly with the thoughtful and constructive speeches which have been made by those who have spoken in the debate, especially in the importance that has been attached by the speakers to the problems and possibilities presented to us, in the western world--that west which, as Professor Toynbee has reminded us, is now surrounded by the world. These problems are particularly affected by the emerging importance of Asia into the new world of industry, and of technique, of the atom and the jet.

At the United Nations we are often reminded by Asian and African speakers that Asia and Africa are on the march, and that they will not be stopped. That of course is true; and there is no reason why we should want to stop them. But we should of course do our best to assist that march toward peaceful co-operation and free progress. And the kind of work referred to in the resolution is one way in which we can help direct that march in the right direction. That is why the subject is such an important one.

In its terms, the resolution is restricted to the United Nations technical assistance organization, and suggests that the government--

--should consider the advisability of introducing legislation at this session to substantially increase Canada's contribution to the United Nations technical assistance organization fund.

I do not myself mind the split infinitive particularly.

I would hope, in view of what I will be able to say about our contribution to that work, that it may not be necessary to divide the House on a matter concerning which I think there is such substantial and, indeed, unanimous agreement.

In the first place, we must make clear the distinction between relief, economic development, and technical assistance itself. So far as relief is concerned and that is not mentioned in this resolution--the United Nations of course is doing important work in this field, especially at the present time in Korea, where Canada has I think played a respectable part.

Then, also, if you like, under that broad category of relief you might consider our contribution to the UN children's fund. We have also made a worth-while contribution to that.

Then there is economic development, which of course is something beyond and apart from technical assistance, and which consists of making loans through international agencies, or through a national agency, and making available credits and investment funds to other countries to help them in their capital and economic development.

The first international agency which comes to mind in that field of course is the international bank. Canada has made available to the international bank, for purposes I have just indicated--lending and re-lending--the whole of her original dollar subscription to the bank's capital, amounting to some \$58 million. That is the largest subscription for this purpose of any member of the bank, except the United States. Up to this point the bank itself has advanced by way of loans and credit somewhat over \$1,700 million. So something is being done through international agencies in that field.

Then there is technical assistance proper, which is the subject of the resolution before us. There are of course two kinds of technical assistance. There is technical assistance which is worked out bilaterally between the contributing government and the receiving government. There comes to mind in this connection the United States point four programme, and our own Commonwealth Colombo Plan under which contributing governments work out plans bilaterally with the receiving government. I am sure my colleague the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Sinclair) will be able to give information on this. I believe this plan is now working very satisfactorily.

Canada has contributed in the first three years of the Colombo Plan something over \$75 million for capital assistance and over \$1 million for technical assistance. And this year the government will ask parliament to vote \$25,400,000--I believe that is the amount tentatively agreed upon--of which a portion will be for technical assistance proper.

Then there are the multilateral schemes for technical assistance, one of which is referred to in the resolution before us. United Nations schemes for technical

assistance can, in their turn, be divided first into the ordinary United Nations programme, which comes out of the annual budget of the United Nations, and the budgets of the various Specialized Agencies, through which Canada has already made a pretty respectable contribution in terms of money and in terms of men. And second there is the scheme which I think the author of the resolution has particularly in mind, that known as the United Nations Expanded Programme for Technical Assistance.

That programme and the other United Nations programme, is carefully organized and controlled by various international bodies. There is, first, the Technical Assistance Committee, under the Economic and Social Council, which represents the 18 governments on the Council. It has a sort of general supervisory jurisdiction over all United Nations schemes of this kind. And then there is the Technical Assistance Administration, the administering body of the Secretariat, which looks after particular schemes, and which now is presided over by a distinguished Canadian, Dr. Keenleyside, who has served in our External Affairs service. And, finally, there is the Technical Assistance Board, which includes representatives of the various Specialized Agencies, and which meets periodically to co-ordinate the work done by these various Agencies and by outside agencies in order to keep overlapping and duplication to a minimum.

That is a very important function; because, as hon. members know, it is very easy in schemes of this kind, especially internationally organized and administered schemes, to duplicate and to overlap. It is very important that the various programme should be balanced, that they should be co-ordinated under wise central direction, and that business judgment should be used to the maximum extent possible in their implementation.

One thing of course that has to be determined by the supervising agencies--and this is also of importance--is the absorptive capacity of a country for technical assistance or for economic aid, so that money will not be poured into a country that cannot be productively used for particular projects, and that the applications of the various governments for help and for funds are carefully scrutinized. As Professor Frank Scott of Montreal, who was concerned with a particular technical assistance programme of the United Nations in Burma, has reminded us in a pamphlet "World War Against Poverty" published by the Royal Society of Canada, it is customary for governments being human, to ask for more than they can usefully spend in a limited time. All these things have to be considered before work can start, or else the work will not be done as effectively as it should be.

Now it is true, and it has been pointed out by previous speakers, that while this may be one of the most important aspects of United Nations work, it is not a phase of that work which gets very much publicity or very many headlines, and that is unfortunate. Too often do we interpret the United Nations in terms of political controversy and not in terms of constructive social and economic activity. It is true and it is too bad that conflicts and controversy are their own publicity agents, but very constructive, quiet social and economic work has no one to sing its praise. Those

of us who have been at the United Nations know from experience that if there is a speech by Mr. Vyshinsky, which is bound to be controversial, or if there is a discussion of the admission of communist China to the United Nations, the galleries will be filled, the delegates' seats will be filled, the television cameras will all be running and the headlines will appear the next day in bold form. But a meeting which may have been held in a committee room in the same building to discuss how to increase food production or eradicate malaria in some Asian or African country will not, I fear, get very much attention or very much publicity. Nonetheless this is important work and we should, I think, be proud to make our contribution to it, as we in this country are doing.

This kind of international technical assistance work and economic aid suffers from two weaknesses, or at least it gets opposition from two sides. There are those who are cynical about it, who are un-cooperative, who do not believe in throwing our money around in foreign countries for what they would call international charity--though it is not charity--and who react in the wrong way to schemes of this kind, the advantage of which is very often long range rather than immediate. But this work sometimes suffers also from a surfeit of sentimentality and a shortage of practicality on the part of those who would pour funds into projects which would do no good to the people whom they are meant to assist, and might under certain circumstances even do them harm.

There is a danger in this field of attempting to do too much in the wrong way, as has been pointed out by the hon. member for Victoria, British Columbia (Mr. Fairey); to do it our way because it is our way, not because it is necessarily the right way. Those dangers have been emphasized in a very useful and interesting publication which has been printed under the auspices of UNESCO and edited by Dr. Margaret Mead of New York, called "Cultural Patterns and Technical Change". She has this to say about the wrong approach to technical assistance:

To introduce change effectively, it is necessary to know existing conditions. Where it involves implementation by people, it must first be accepted. Otherwise the new proposals, however simple, will be defeated. When pest control is imperative, people will nevertheless release the rats from their traps. Where immunization of cattle is necessary farmers will hide their cattle. And where land reform is introduced without accompanying measures for a reform credit system, the land will again be concentrated in the hands of a few within a few years. And since change is proposed in the interests of human welfare, it is important to see to it that it is introduced constructively or, at any rate, with a minimum of disruption and destruction of established inter-relationships and values. Basic attitudes, concepts, and values are, therefore, here considered.

Then she quotes some very interesting examples of what follows when these right principles are not applied to technical assistance and aid. I again read from her publication:

"In Burma, deep ploughing introduced by European agricultural experts broke up the hard pan that held the water in the rice fields. The weeding of rubber plantations reduced the sap. The new tomato, which the Burmese were persuaded to grow (by technical assistance experts) because it was more productive, has a flavour they did not like, (and they would not eat it). In Turkey, experts trained abroad persuaded some of the younger peasants to remove the stones from their tilled land; when the grain sprouted, the fields of the old men had a better crop, since, in that dry climate, the stones served the function of preserving moisture. In Greece, the wheat in fertilized fields did not resist the drought as well as the wheat in other fields, and the experts realized that earlier-ripening varieties should be planted if the fields were to be fertilized. Mistakes of this sort are acceptable to people who are willing to take the risk of trying the new; but they shake the faith of those who believe in tried and proven procedure alone."

Therefore, as we all agree, it is not only necessary to have the resources to do this work; it is necessary that the work should be done in the right way and on the right principles. In that connection the principles that should underly technical assistance work were very well and impressively outlined the other day in Washington by the director of the foreign operations administration of the United States, Mr. Harold E. Stassen, when he said--and this has also been emphasized by speakers in this debate--we should not consider this activity as a form of handout or charity. Mr. Stassen said:

"Technical assistance is not a "give-away" programme. To conduct it as such would be the quickest way to destroy it. Projects undertaken should therefore be co-operative in nature and every single programme and project must be based on a careful study of local needs; local conditions, local resources available and desires of the host governments."

"The aim of such programmes is not to subsidize, not to bolster weak spots, but to lay foundations for self-improvement through work on the elimination of debilitating diseases and the control of conditions endangering health and life; through dissemination of knowledge regarding better farm methods; through the improvement of education; through providing technical advice on matters of transportation to enable people to bring the product of their toil to market, and to break the insulation of mind and body in which so many still live."

When these right principles are applied to practical projects the experience of the United Nations already--and it is a short experience--shows that some astonishingly productive results can be achieved from small expenditures and very small changes.

A year or two ago the United Nations sent a technical assistance mission to Afghanistan. In that mission were technical experts from 14 countries covering an extensive range of skills. They were sent to help the Afghan people move toward economic and social betterment. The mission included a public administrator from

France, a geologist and a nurse from the Netherlands, a plant entomologist from the United Kingdom, a sericulturist from China, a Polish statistician, a Danish pediatrician, experts in teacher training and agricultural development from the United States, a public health adviser from India, and a Finnish obstetrician. I suppose obstetrics could be considered a form of technical assistance.

One simple and inexpensive change was introduced into Afghanistan by Mr. John Dickenson, a farmer from Arkansas, who obtained great results by introducing the hitherto unheard of common hoe. Mr. Owen, who is in charge of the UN technical assistance board, reported on this as follows:

"Traditionally the Afghan farmers have broadcast their cotton seed like wheat. But our agricultural experts proved, on his 34 demonstration plots, that if the cotton is planted in rows and if the farmer will use the hoe instead of the heavy mattock, then production will improve. In fact the first demonstration produced a yield two-and-a-half times greater than by the traditional methods, and the government promptly ordered 30,000 hoes, as well as encouraging their manufacture by local blacksmiths. By such very simple, indeed almost primitive, means as these, a small but decisive revolution is being brought about in Afghan production."

In addition to this kind of technical help, as has been pointed out already today, these people need sympathy, understanding and a knowledge of their local customs. In some respects that kind of approach and that kind of understanding are just as important as material support. Having said that, I should add that material support must follow sympathy and understanding of they cannot be effectively used. Perhaps for a moment we might look at what has been contributed by the United Nations in the way of material support.

I know that the amount has been put on the record already, and I know also that it is small indeed in terms of the astronomical figure devoted to armaments. It is also small indeed in terms of the need and necessity of these people, but it is not quite so small in terms of the practical results which can be accomplished in the early stages of this new international work. We have already had proof of that in our experience with the Colombo Plan. I do not think it is wrong to say that if we had contributed twice as much to the Colombo Plan in the first two years we would not have been able to effectively spend that total amount.

Having regard to those circumstances, the record shows that in the first 18 months of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance a total of \$20,070,000 was contributed by members of the United Nations. Canada contributed \$850,000. In 1952 the total was \$19,000,000, and our contribution was \$750,000. In 1953 the total amount went up to \$22,000,000 while our contribution went up to \$800,000. We have been trying to keep what we think is a fair relationship between our contribution and the total amount contributed by the United Nations.

While what we contribute should not necessarily be determined by what others contribute, nevertheless that is a factor which has to be taken into consideration, even if it is not the over-riding consideration.

In the current year 1954, according to the latest information which we have been able to secure, and it is as of yesterday, 70 countries, partly as the result of an intensive campaign which has been put on in New York, have pledged themselves to contribute to the technical assistance fund. The amount firmly pledged is something over \$24 million.

The hon. member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Thomas) has asked whether we could not do something ourselves to insure that these pledges are converted into payments. We have through our delegation to the United Nations played a very active part in trying to have the pledges increased. In fact in 1952 my colleague the Minister of Northern Development and National Resources (Mr. Lesage) was the chairman of the pledging committee. We also played a most active part in the pledging committee last autumn. We did what we could to get the amount up, and as an earnest of our endeavour in that regard we indicated through our representative to the United Nations, Senator McKeen, that we would increase our amount this year from \$800,000 to \$1,500,000 (U.S.). That is, we would ask parliament to increase the amount provided the support from other contributors warranted such an amount, and provided the total amount pledged was such as to keep the programme at an economically sound level.

We made that offer last autumn, which represented a considerable proportionate increase, and I think it had something to do with the other countries increasing their amounts. At least I hope it had. As a result there has been pledged already this year some \$24 million. It seems clear that the conditions which we have laid down in regard to the increase in our contribution are to be fulfilled, and therefore it will be the intention of the government when that is confirmed to include an amount of \$700,000 in the supplementary estimates to bring our total contribution to this programme up to \$1,500,000.<sup>A</sup>

The hon. member for Wetaskiwin asked in his speech whether I could give any information as to the expenditures from this fund behind the iron and bamboo curtains. So far as I know, and I think I have the facts, no United Nations funds contributed to the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance have been expended in those countries to which the hon. member referred. Of course they have their own schemes for technical assistance. We do get information, for instance, of Soviet help in the way of technical assistance programmes in China, but that is quite apart from the United Nations programme.

<sup>A</sup> It should be noted that the Canadian pledge to the United Nations Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance was in United States currency. To help meet Canada's contribution an amount of \$850,000 (Canadian) has been included in the estimates for 1954-55. Thus the maximum amount to be included in the supplementary estimate in order to bring the total Canadian contribution to the maximum amount pledged would be something less than \$650,000 (Canadian), depending on the exchange rate between the Canadian and the United States dollar.

As was indicated, last autumn the Soviet representative made a pledge of approximately \$1 million to the United Nations scheme for the current year 1953 but, as pointed out, that pledge was hedged around with certain conditions which were not satisfactory to the United Nations technical assistance administration because they violated the principles which govern technical assistance and which were laid down by the Economic and Social Council. However, that matter is being taken up with the Soviet government by the United Nations officials in charge of this activity, and it is hoped that those conditions will be withdrawn so that this amount can be used in the way in which it should be used, without strings attached.

The Canadian contribution to technical assistance has been exceeded only by that of the United Kingdom, the United States and France in the past. If Parliament votes the amount which probably will be requested this year in the main and supplementary estimates, Canada's contribution will be the third largest of the members of the United Nations. I do not think that is anything we should say boastfully, but it does at least show we are playing a respectable part in this very important effort.

We are also playing a part not only in the contribution of funds but in the contribution of experts through the United Nations. In Canada today there are 217 United Nations technical assistance trainees out of a total of 300; the rest of them come under the Colombo Plan programme. And there are 96 Canadian experts now serving abroad in the United Nations.

Under the Colombo Plan programme it has been difficult to find as many qualified people as we have been asked to provide and as we would have liked to provide because experts of the kind required are in great demand in this country. Some of them have had to make considerable sacrifices to take part in this important U.N. work. The training of experts, in the last analysis, is just about as important as supplying capital assistance, because eventually this kind of work has to be done by these people in their own countries. When we can get them to come here and learn our technical methods and send them back to do the work themselves, that is the kind of help that really matters.

In conclusion I would like to express my agreement with the spirit and indeed the content of this resolution, and to emphasize that we are doing something to carry out the advice contained in it, I also express the hope that it will commend itself to all hon. members in this House because, as has been said more than once, the war on want and backwardness, on deprivation and distress, is a road to peace.

LIBRARY E A / BIBLIOTHÈQUE A E



3 5036 01046085 8