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WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION

Text of statement made in the Third Committee
by the Canadian Representative, Professor R.
St. J. Macdonald on item 54 (World Social
Situation) on Wednesday, December 14, 1966

Madam Chairman, I will confine my remarks at this time to those questions of social development which are referred to in Chapter X, Section I of the Economic and Social Council Report before us.

Madam Chairman, it has been said time and again that social development should go in tandem with economic development. No one would deny the importance of this relationship. We have come to learn, however, that social development, in the sense of increasing levels-of-living for all persons in a society, is not necessarily the evenly-distributed result of economic development. Indeed the very processes of change involved in economic advance often work against the fundamental social objective of raising the levels of living for significant groups in the population. We have also come to realize that programmes of social development, in addition to their own intrinsic worth, are often pre-requisites to stable economic growth. For these reasons, we strongly support the actions taken by the 41st Session of ECOSOC to strengthen the Commission for Social Development, to publicize the findings of the 1965 Report on the World Social Situation, and to move ahead with certain new undertakings in the social field.

It is not our intention to consider each of these items in any detail because Canada's views have been recorded elsewhere. It may be useful nonetheless to indicate the relationship which we believe exists between these various topics - to indicate the ways in which we think the actions taken by the Council at its recent session will strengthen its capacity to develop meaningful social policies that will assist member states in a practical way.

The most significant change is, of course, the renewed mandate given to the Commission for Social Development. In our opinion, the consensus to update the objectives, methods and work programme of the

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Commission reflects the growing recognition that "social objectives" must be in the forefront of all our planning, and that, in securing and maintaining this focus, a strong and viable functional Commission for Social Development plays an essential role. The details of this reappraisal have been reported on a number of occasions. I need only emphasize at this time that the two distinct but related responsibilities of the Commission, namely, to advise ECOSOC on broad social policy questions, and to formulate specific programmes of practical assistance to member states, have been enunciated and agreed upon.

We recognize, Madam Chairman, that these responsibilities can be carried out successfully only if States serving on the Commission nominate appropriately qualified representatives, and if sufficient resources, both direct and indirect, are made available to implement the necessary work programmes. In this connection, I would point again to the fact that the Commission is responsible, in addition to its broad planning function, for certain sectoral programmes which are primarily or uniquely the responsibility of the United Nations. We believe it essential that recognition be given to these two aspects of the work programme by those responsible for allocating the regular budget and other funds. We share the concern, expressed by several representatives at the ECOSOC meetings, that only one-sixth of the available United Nations resources for economic and social development is directed to the social sector.

Turning momentarily to the 1965 Report on the World Social Situation, my delegation merely wishes to express its approval of the action taken by the Council as reported in paragraph 365 of the ECOSOC Report. As is noted, the 1965 Report offers a number of practical guidelines which will be of use to international agencies and to Member States in evaluating their methods of promoting economic and social change. As a technical document, the Report serves as a reminder of the complexity of the phenomenon of change and development, about which we still know comparatively little. It is only common sense, therefore, that we make every effort to learn from past experience.

Madam Chairman, the 1965 Report on the World Social Situation is an example of the type of research which enables the Commission for Social Development to speak with authority based on facts rather than assumptions. This series of reports and others of a similar character are coming to represent valuable tools for the development of meaningful social policy. It is also worth noting that the Report itself represents the combined effort of the United Nations Secretariat, the International Labour Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

The research Training Programme on Regional Development illustrates another facet of the activities of the Commission for Social Development which, quite rightly, was warmly endorsed by the Council. As our statement before ECOSOC pointed out, the potential results of this programme will be of direct relevance to less developed and more developed countries alike. There has been serious criticism that, on the one hand, too much attention has been paid to programmes devoted to purely local development, while, on the other hand, concern has been voiced that planning at the national level is too far removed from the level at which implementation of these plans must occur. We hope, Madam Chairman, that by learning from the experience of others, and by training national personnel in the planning, administrative and evaluative techniques of regional development, a bridge may be found to link the national and the local. Canada will be happy, of course, to share her own experience in the area of agricultural rehabilitation and development, and we look forward to the first reports on this new United Nations programme so that we may benefit from the global experience.

The 1968 Conference of Ministers responsible for Social Welfare is important to social development in another way. It will focus attention on a particular theme, which in our opinion is a very practical one. The Conference will examine the role of social welfare programmes in national development for the purpose of identifying common elements in social welfare functions: formulating principles for social welfare programmes and related aspects of social development activities at the local level; promoting the training of manpower for social welfare; and recommending further action by the United Nations in this field.

We believe that a thorough examination of these subjects by social welfare Ministers and their senior advisers can lead to practical results in at least four ways. It will assist the Commission for Social Development in formulating more precise policies for consideration by ECOSOC; it will help the Commission and other organizations in evaluating the effectiveness of current multilateral programmes of technical assistance in this sector; it will provide valuable information to individual governments co-operating in bilateral programmes of technical aid; and finally, Madam Chairman, by coming together for the first time in an international conference devoted specifically to their concerns, Ministers and their advisers will have an opportunity to discuss, and we hope evaluate, their own particular programmes and problems in the light of others' experience.

If these objectives are to be realized, careful preparation will be required by all those who will be participating, particularly the social welfare ministries themselves. It is most important therefore that the Preparatory Committee pay particular attention to the need for the early distribution of its agenda and documentation so that ministries and other organizations and Agencies involved will have the maximum time for preparation. Given this serious consideration, we believe this Conference can be a significant and perhaps even an historic milestone in the evolution of the social welfare programme of the United Nations.

