



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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CANADIAN YOUTH SERVES THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

An Address by the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, to the Canadian University Service Overseas in Ottawa, October 1, 1965.

I am very pleased, Mr. Chairman, to be present at this annual meeting of Canadian University Service Overseas.

Your organization - started by voluntary initiative and maintained by voluntary effort - has been aptly described as a spontaneous and vital counter-thrust of Canadian society to specific international challenges.

The voluntary service on which CUSO is based is a Canadian tradition which extends back to the earliest days of settlement in Canada - settlement by people from two great European civilizations, French and English....

To say that CUSO has been a trail-blazer in Canada's voluntary efforts to help the developing countries of our world is accurate but inadequate. Such a statement can hardly bring alive the thousands of hours of hard work undertaken in your organization by all sorts of people.

I have reviewed your work, as outlined in the latest annual report of your Executive Secretary, and I am most impressed with your programmes and your achievements. I congratulate all of you for this great effort in the field of international co-operation.

It was Arnold Toynbee who said: "Our age will be remembered because it is the first generation since the dawn of history to believe it practical to make the benefits of civilization available to the whole human race." This statement by such an eminent historian underlines the greatest challenge confronting today's industrially-advanced societies: the challenge to assist people everywhere to enjoy the sort of life which can only exist through decent educational opportunities, good health standards, and growing economies.

Yet the realization that we now have the capacity to make the benefits of civilization available to the whole human race seems to be more of an emotional attitude than a conscious, rational commitment to the cause of international development. Despite the very considerable efforts of the Western democracies during the past 15 years, the poor countries of the world are now worse off economically, compared with the rich nations, than they were in 1945. The gap has widened between the two worlds.

With our command of technology, we of the Western industrial nations can confidently expect to grow by at least 3 per cent a year. In the developing continents, even that rate of growth is precarious and, when achieved, is swallowed up by population growth. So the prosperity of the rich nations is leaping ahead of the poor nations almost with the speed of rockets to the moon.

Just as, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the misery of the masses was the root, for long years, of an underlying threat of violence, so, today, the misery of the dispossessed people, coupled with their "rising expectations", is the chief raw material of world-wide revolutionary violence and subversion -- a movement which, especially in the case of China, is taking on an additional and ominous strain of racism.

Well, we know all this. I am repeating to you things that are in danger of becoming clichés. Yet they are true. We are living on a powder-keg of anger and revolt. We are living in a world so small that the violence affects us all. We are confronted with the risk of international class war. The curious fact today is not that we do not know these things but that a great many people are bored with them and feel less and less obligation to do anything about them. There is a sort of "weariness with well-doing" after two decades of economic assistance, a feeling that not much good has, in fact, been done; that aid has been squandered, and that, even if it got to the people it ought to help, probably they would by then have too many children to get much benefit from it. The mood is thus not so much to deny the crisis but simply to avert national attention from it and then rationalize the indifference by pleading the impossibility of effective action.

One reason for this malaise stems from the nature of our reporting of developments. In foreign affairs, as in most other things, bad news is usually good news. The crises, the eruptions, the violence, the catastrophes - these are the staples of headlines and stories. All of you know about President Nasser telling the United States to put its aid in the Red Sea and President Sukarno telling the Americans to "go jump" in the Indonesian equivalent of "the lake". All of you know that burning American libraries or stoning American embassies has become a popular "under-developed" sport. All this news produces a certain disillusionment about foreign aid -- certainly in the U.S.A., the country where most of it comes from.

Above all, there is current disenchantment because the value of aid as related to it, the necessity of peace, seem to be subordinated to political factors that make for conflict which could not only wipe out the benefit of aid already received but prejudice its continuance.

Notwithstanding all this, we should not forget the great successes already achieved in the field of mutual assistance.

In Pakistan over the last five years, industry has been growing by 12 to 15 per cent a year, farming by nearly 4 per cent, national income by 6 to 7 per cent, exports by 7 per cent. This is an economic success story as startling as any in the contemporary world. It has been made possible by sustained, sensible Western aid administered through a World Bank consortium. Yet who knows about it?

Or take India. For the last decade - and in spite of some severe natural disasters - industry has never ceased to grow by less than 8 per cent a year. The country has reversed its tendency to declining output on the farms. Recent grain harvests are the highest in history. None of this would have been possible without consortium aid.

These two countries together - India and Pakistan - make up nearly 50 per cent of the developing world. Their aid programmes are the largest and the most truly multi-national in the West. We didn't hear much about them. But we hear today, every hour, inevitably and necessarily, about the tragic possibility of war between these two Commonwealth countries, which could reverse, perhaps beyond recovery, the progress that has been made by them.

We can add to the successes of mutual aid one overall consideration. In 1945, it must have seemed to the Communists that the poverty-stricken, under-developed, colonial world would be a "push-over" for Communism. Lenin, indeed, suggested that the way to world control would lie through colonial revolution. Twenty years later, all through the developing nations, there is dynamic change occurring - but within the framework of an open, plural world. This, in part, is the achievement of economic assistance. Could one ask for a more vital success?

While there is bound, then, to be a deep concern over current conflicts between countries whose people we wish well and desire to help, this should not be permitted to determine our own attitude toward foreign aid or developing peoples. Nor should it be determined by the mere calculation of success or failure of past efforts.

Having set in motion the processes of growth and welfare and modernization, are we to withdraw our interest as the process develops or as the going gets tough?

I believe that what distinguishes our Western civilization from all other human cultures has been its profound sense of social and moral obligation. From our Hebraic roots we derive this sense of God's compassion for the poor and the needy and God's judgement on the wealthy who do nothing about these needs. It is not Dives but Lazarus who sits in the bosom of Abraham. It is not the Pharisee but the Publican who finds favour in God's sight. Those who feed the hungry and clothe the naked are God's people, even if they have never heard of Him. Those who do not, can cry "Lord, Lord" until judgement day and will be rejected just the same.

Why should we think that our Western world, with its vast and growing resources, is in some way exempt from the judgements of history and of God? Have the deepest moral imperatives of our civilization been abrogated just because, at last, we have the resources to fulfil them or those whom we wish to help at times disappoint us?

Canadians have played an active role in this story of international aid and development. The record is well known to you. Of course we have not done enough. I doubt that any amount of assistance will ever be enough. But my Government intends to increase our foreign aid allocation substantially in the years ahead.

We must also develop collaboration and co-operation between the public and the private sector in the cause of international development. I do not feel we have explored fully the possible dimensions of such collaboration and co-operation.

To those of us who have worked in this field, one fact is clear: there are some things that government can do, and some things that government cannot do. This is as true in international activities as in the domestic sphere. There are things also that government can do in the right way or in the wrong way. In the latter case, they might as well - or better - have done nothing.

This is a major reason why it is important for voluntary organizations and government to sit down together to determine how their distinctive contributions can most effectively be made - whether their efforts in some fields should be co-operative or joined - and how best to bring such joint efforts about.

An example is co-operation between the Government of Canada and the Canadian University Service Overseas.

In this report, your Executive Secretary refers to the partnership between the Government and CUSO, which was established in 1964 and extended this year when the Government made a grant of half-a-million dollars to your organization.

This assistance does not, and should not, affect the voluntary character and independence of CUSO. As the Secretary of State for External Affairs put it at the time:

"I believe that an active working partnership between CUSO and the Government can be achieved and maintained, a partnership which will preserve the independence and the vitality and the voluntary character of CUSO, while at the same time lending the stability and the resources of the Government."

Just before the Government announced its financial aid to CUSO, the Speech from the Throne disclosed that the Government intended to establish a Company of Young Canadians, through which the energies and talents of youth could be enlisted in projects of social and economic development within Canada and abroad.

Subsequently, an organizing committee for the Company of Young Canadians was appointed, with your own Dr. Leddy as chairman, and composed of young Canadians themselves. At that time, I expressed to the committee members the hope that one of its priorities would be to study and assess the ways in which we in government could assist in an expansion of the CUSO programme.

The partnership and co-operation that has been developed between CUSO and the Government will, I am confident, extend to CUSO and the Company of Young Canadians. The prominent role of Dr. Leddy in both organizations -

which would be known in the world of corporate business as an "interlocking directorate" - should help guarantee the co-operation all of us seek.

There has been some press comment recently suggesting that the organization of the Company of Young Canadians has been stalled by the election. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Dr. Leddy, as chairman of the organizing committee, this week issued a report on the work of his committee to date. That report certainly shows real progress in the short period of four months since his committee was set up. There have been almost constant discussions and consultations with voluntary organizations and government departments, with youth groups and interested individuals, in seeking to define the tasks and opportunities for the Company of Young Canadians. As Dr. Leddy said, these exchanges have been not only useful, they have been essential, to the organizing committee's job of assessing the potential for voluntary service within Canada and abroad, and the committee expects to present its report to me within five or six weeks.

In the meantime, after only four months of study, the Chairman reports:

"The response of young Canadians and of voluntary service groups to the concept of the Company of Young Canadians has been positive and enthusiastic. Our work this summer has convinced us of the great possibilities for placing qualified, highly motivated youthful people in positions of great challenge.

"We continue to look forward to the early establishment of the Company of Young Canadians to help with the solution of some of the urgent problems of human, social and economic under-development within Canada and abroad."

I should think that this interim report should satisfy most Canadians that the Company of Young Canadians - far from being in limbo, as sarcastically suggested in some impatient quarters - is very much alive.

I can assure you that, when the Government receives Dr. Leddy's final report, no time will be wasted in preparing the necessary legislation and presenting it to Parliament.

I can assure you also of the determination of the Government to continue to develop the most active partnership and co-operation with CUSO, whether through direct assistance or through the Company of Young Canadians.

We are very conscious of the vitality and voluntary character of CUSO; we know you will do your part to continue and preserve these qualities and traditions. I want you to know that we intend to do what we can to help you.

S/C