

VERNMENT



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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CANADA AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO  
UNDER-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Text of an address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson, at the Annual Congress of the Co-operative Union of Canada, Ottawa, March 4, 1952.

The first consideration of Canadian foreign policy is the problem of our national security.

A second is the problem of our relationship with the other free countries of the world community -- especially those in Asia -- who have not participated in the material prosperity which has resulted largely from the technological advances we have made in the Western world during the past two hundred years.

More than ever, in a world in which physical distances have so shrunk that countries far away are now our neighbours, the phrase "East and West" implies a cultural and economic rather than a geographical separation. Our association in the Commonwealth of Nations and our membership in the United Nations offers us a bridge of sympathy and understanding to three of these Asian countries. It also gives us a corresponding responsibility to examine with care and urgency the problems of the "have-not" nations of that great and ancient area.

When we in the West speak of improving economic and social conditions in our own countries we think in terms of raising our standards of living. The basic problem of most of the peoples of Asia, however, does not concern the standard of living but how to maintain life itself. Never have so many subsisted on so little. Nearly a thousand million Asians are trying to exist on a diet amounting to only 80 per cent of the pre-war level -- the level of the "hungry East". The daily ration in rice in some urban areas has shrunk to five or six ounces per person as compared with the normal pre-war daily consumption of sixteen to eighteen ounces. Since 1945 India's food production has deteriorated. In spite of 165 million people being engaged in agriculture on 170 million acres of land devoted to food crops, the people are living from "ship to mouth".

The real hope of saving the millions of Asians from hunger and hardship depends not upon importing food from abroad but upon increasing the productivity of the lands of their own countries.

The partition of the sub-continent has handicapped the economic recovery of both India and Pakistan. Political differences fanned by the Communists into open warfare have cut food exports from Burma, Malaya and Indo-China. The prevalence of out-moded conditions both of labour and of land tenure have impeded improvements in agricultural production.

In India the individual holdings are so fragmented that it is difficult for the average farmer to raise enough to feed his own family. In Malaya 60 per cent of the farmers are small holders. In other parts of Asia the problem is more or less the same. Because the tenant does not want the major benefits of his efforts to pass to the absentee owner, the land remains without substantial improvement. In the absence of any small-credit facilities the farmer has had frequently to mortgage his holding, his future and that of his children to the unscrupulous money lender.

Without fundamental agrarian reform in Asia, therefore, it would be foolish to expect the full co-operation of the man who tills the soil in undertaking measures to step up food production.

A major factor impeding improvement is the use of primitive tools and techniques and the lack of knowledge of the science of agriculture. The steady growth of population in spite of the high mortality rate has increased the pressure on available resources of food. The lack of careful and well-coordinated planning, ignorance and illiteracy amongst the rural masses are further contributing factors that have made a solution of this basic problem of agricultural backwardness in Asia difficult.

As the dreadful facts of Asian poverty and misery have become more widely known in the West, some people, overwhelmed by the enormity of the problem, have taken refuge in the attitude that, on the one hand anything the West can or should do would be too little to have any real effect upon the problems of the area or, on the other, that making conditions of life more tolerable through increased supplies of food and better health and so cutting the mortality rate would merely increase the number of mouths to be fed and create an even greater problem.

Undernourishment and near starvation, however, do not reduce population. They actually cause over-population. Paradoxical as it may seem, if we were able to feed the hungry in India and other places the birth rate in those nations would begin to drop. China, India, Egypt and the Latin American countries, with the lowest nutritional levels in the world, have the highest rates of population growth.

The Asian countries are making great efforts to cope with the problems of economic development that confront them. But in tackling these problems the peoples of Asia are not willing to see their own culture lose its unique values and turn into a mere imitation of the West. It must not be forgotten that a major factor in the Asian acceptance of many Western ways has been paradoxically their desire to gain national independence in order to preserve their own cultural values even at the expense of economic advantage. Not all Asian leaders agree upon the value to their countries of the religious, cultural and political influences they have previously

received from the West. There is, however, one factor of the culture of the West, which most leaders of Asia feel could be of permanent value to them. That factor is science and technology.

Here, then, it seems to me, is one firm and clearly defined basis upon which to build mutual understanding between East and West.

There is nothing new in the exchange of technological information, nor in the provision of technical advice or "know-how" by the people of one country to those of another. Sometimes the motives have been purely humanitarian and disinterested in character, but more frequently the goal has been the improvement of commercial relations, the advancement of national interests or the winning of economic concessions. But it has been taking place for many decades.

The two programmes of international technical assistance to which the Canadian Government is now contributing and in which many Canadians are actively participating are, however, new and unique.

The first and more important of these is the United Nations Expanded Technical Assistance Programme. Here for the first time almost all the countries of the free world (the Soviet Bloc refused to participate despite their constant professions of solicitude for the welfare of the peoples of the underdeveloped countries) have co-operated in pooling their resources to give technical assistance to member governments which are in need of such assistance and which request it.

Canada contributed \$850,000. to the first 18 months' operation of this programme and has offered to contribute at least \$750,000. and up to \$850,000 (depending upon the amounts offered by other leading contributing countries) towards the objective of \$20 millions for the succeeding twelve months' period.

This comprehensive programme, which is operated by the Technical Assistance Administration of the United Nations, the Director-General of which is Dr. H.L. Keenleyside, formerly our Deputy Minister of Resources and Development, and by the Specialized Agencies, such as the Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Health Organization, is already firmly established on a continuing basis.

Since the beginning of the Programme in July 1950 we have received 46 United Nations Fellows from underdeveloped countries for special training in Canada, in addition to many directed to us by the Specialized Agencies. We have completed training arrangements for an additional twenty-seven amongst them a young Haitian whose training in co-operatives is being arranged by your national office.

Canadians are also serving abroad in the field under the United Nations programmes, many of them in Asian countries. Professor Frank Scott of McGill University has recently gone to Burma to be resident co-ordinator of United Nations technical assistance activities in those countries. Mr. George P. Melrose, Deputy Minister of Lands for the Province of British Columbia, served for a time as Chief of the United Nations Technical Assistance Mission to El Salvador. Eight Canadians are at present serving abroad under the technical assistance programme of the International Labour Organization.

One of the Canadians serving abroad with the FAO is Professor A.E. Hardy of the Department of Agricultural Engineering of the University of Saskatchewan. He is advising the Government of Ceylon on how to cope with its problem of agricultural development. There is a constant demand for the services of additional experts from our Federal and Provincial government departments, from Canadian universities and from private professions.

Because we realize that the needs of the peoples of South and Southeast Asia for technical assistance are particularly urgent, we helped to establish and are now participating in the Colombo Programme for Technical Co-operation. It is not possible for the Asian countries to carry out their plans for economic development without trained manpower and without the benefit of technical advice from the West. In addition, therefore to the \$25 million the Canadian Government contributed to the Colombo Plan for Economic Development in the area for the year 1951-52 and to the same amount for 1952-53 for which Parliamentary approval will be sought, the Government secured Parliamentary authorization for an appropriation of \$400,000. to the technical co-operation programme for South and Southeast Asia for each of the past two fiscal years and is recommending a similar contribution for 1952-53.

Many of you may have come in contact with some of the fifty trainees chiefly from India and Pakistan, who have already come to Canada under this scheme. In addition, during this past year we have received three technical missions composed of senior officials from India, Pakistan and Ceylon. Some of the Indian members of the agricultural mission were particularly interested in the agricultural co-operative movement in this country and hoped to apply some of what they had learned from members of the Co-operative Union of Canada when they returned to their jobs at home.

We have had greater difficulty in meeting requests for experts but we are doing our best. A fisheries consultant from British Columbia has been sent to Ceylon to assist in the development of the fishing industry and he was followed by a refrigeration engineer to work in the same field. In addition, the Canadian Government is defraying the expenses of a survey to be undertaken in Pakistan by the Commonwealth Biological Control Service with a view to setting up a biological control station there.

Typical of the requests we are receiving from our Asian friends is one from Ceylon for a soil conservationist to give courses to groups of trainees, one from India, for instructor engineers for the Indian Institute of Science and one from Pakistan, for a three-man team to survey and advise on facilities for the preservation, processing and marketing of fruits, milk and similar produce. We are indeed hopeful that we can fill some of these requests for Canadian experts in addition to making training facilities available in Canada.

The Canadian Government regards the Colombo Programme for Technical Co-operation as a temporary supplement to the technical assistance activities of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies in South and Southeast Asia. We consider it important, therefore, not only to avoid any duplication or overlapping between the United Nations programmes and the Colombo Programme but also to insure that every effort is directed towards integrating them to as large an extent as possible.

We hope that the United Nations, if it is given appropriate support in these activities, will be able to assume by the end of a three or four-year period the major responsibility for technical assistance in South and Southeast Asia and we are urging the greatest possible use of all U.N. Agencies offering technical assistance to South and Southeast Asia. That is not to say that as a participant in the six-year Colombo Plan for the economic development of the area and particularly as a member of the Commonwealth we will not have a direct and continuing interest in special technical assistance to those countries. But we do not wish the two approaches to this problem to overlap or conflict. We do what we can to avoid this. Let me give two examples.

As part of our activities this year under the Colombo Programme we have invited an Asian public health mission to come to Canada. This mission will be composed of twelve fairly senior public health officials from those countries who will study the organization and administration of our public health services in Canada at federal, provincial and municipal levels. Before making final arrangements for the mission our own Department of National Health and Welfare is seeking the advice of the Regional Offices of WHO which are most familiar with the particular deficiencies of the public health services in those countries.

At the request of the Government of Pakistan, we have offered to give training in Canada in public administration to twelve young Pakistani civil servants. But in drawing up the programme we are consulting the public administration officials of the U.N. Technical Assistance Administration who have built up a detailed knowledge of Asian requirements in that field.

There are two other considerations which should guide our participation in both the United Nations and the Colombo Programmes. First, we should concentrate on the training of middle and lower grade workers and technicians and secondly, we should concentrate on the training of these people in the areas in which they live. The Asian countries themselves have requested this training in the report which is the basis of technical assistance activities under the Colombo Programme, and the General Assembly of the United Nations has recently reaffirmed its belief in the same principles.

I have referred to the basic need of increased food production in the area. The technical assistance we provide to South and Southeast Asia should, therefore, be directly related to efforts to solve this problem.

I think it is true to say that the whole concept of economic and technical aid to under-developed countries and of our participation in these programmes of technical assistance would have been inconceivable as recently as in the 1930's. I think we would have decided then that for both economic and practical reasons such schemes were impossible. In participating in these programmes we have embarked upon an experiment in international relations motivated by political and moral considerations which are both new and demanding.

The present modest rate and scale of these programmes is determined not only by our ability to make the assistance available but also by the ability of receiving countries to absorb it and put it to best use. Our assistance must be

clearly and closely related to the local needs as the local authorities see them. We can and should assist those countries in assessing their requirements and in formulating them, but the judgment as to how those requirements can best be met must be their own.

Ruskin phrased a definition of technical assistance when he said of education that it was finding out what people were trying to do and helping them to do it better. That is what we are hoping to accomplish now. But there is a larger objective.

Our participation in these programmes of technical assistance offers us a two-way bridge of co-operation with the countries of Asia. That is why it is of such vital importance that they should succeed.

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