

External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

No. 53/45 PALESTINE REFUGEES

Text of a statement made on November 6, 1953, by the alternate Representative on the Canadian Delegation, Mr. G.B. Summers, Q.C., in Ad Hoc Committee of the eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, dealing with agenda item 19 - Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (resolutions 302 (IV) of December 8, 1949, and 614 (VII) of November 6, 1952).

(Note - Text of the resolution passed by the Ad Hoc Committee on November 12, 1953 is included at the end of this Supplementary Paper).

On behalf of the Canadian Delegation I would like to comment briefly on the reports now before this committee and the draft resolution which has been presented for our consideration.

The report of the Director contains certain points from which we can draw some small measure of encouragement in considering the difficult and tragic problem of the refugees. The Agency is to be complimented on the practical steps which are being taken for the preservation of the refugees' health and in respect of education and rehabilitation. It is gratifying to note that a number of programme agreements have been signed. No one can deny, however, that the report places before us in plain and blunt terms a discouraging situation. In considering this third report of the Director, we do not find that progress has been made towards the solution of this problem to the extent which had been hoped when the Agency was established. The number of refugees dependent upon relief provided by the international community is almost exactly the same as that registered at the end of 1951, and there is a yearly increase. There are serious obstacles to be overcome if tangible progress is to be achieved in implementing the provisions of the three-year plan. We are faced moreover with the plain statement from the Director and the Advisory Commission that in spite of all efforts, it is now clear that the rehabilitation of all the Arab refugees in existing economic and political circumstances is for all practical purposes impossible and that projects contemplated cannot be expected to provide for more than a proportion of the refugee population.

In the light of the facts set out in these reports the recommendations which the Director and the Advisory Commission invite us to approve should, we think, receive the support of this committee.

The Canadian Delegation therefore supports the resolution which has been presented to the committee. This resolution in the first place continues the mandate of the Agency until June 1955 and calls for a review of its programme at the ninth session of the General Assembly. The difficult problem with which the United Nations is faced is not incapable of solution if the full co-operation of all members of the Assembly can be given and it is therefore our earnest hope that when we come to consider this question next year, progress will have been made and that, as is the hope of all of us, an eventual solution providing for the full rehabilitation of those unfortunate people will be apparent.

The resolution goes on to authorize the Agency to adopt a relief budget and states that the projects fund previously authorized should be maintained. The extent of relief provided in relation to any reasonable standard of need is modest indeed. All will agree, in addition, that the great need is for the implementation of projects which will substitute for relief a proper means of livelihood.

The resolution goes on to request the Negotiating Committee to seek the funds required.

When the Agency was established, Canada joined with other countries in voting in favour of the General Assembly resolution but reserved its position with respect to financial contributions to the three-year programme. The Canadian representative explained that the Canadian Government attached great importance to securing the broad financial support of members of the Assembly and was also interested in the degree of co-operation given to the Agency by host governments.

Canada has found it possible to contribute to the relief of the refugees -- an amount of about \$3 million in all since 1948. It can, I think, be assumed that this contribution would have been even greater if our original hopes for the development of the programme had in fact been realised. In supporting a resolution which authorizes the Negotiating Committee to seek further funds, we must make a similar reservation as to the position the Canadian Government will take when the time comes to consider what contribution it may be able to make. There can be no doubt that such an appeal will receive most careful and sympathetic consideration, but my Government will of course have to consider all relevant factors, and in particular the support received by the Agency from other countries.

We do note with gratification the co-operation which has been given by the host governments towards finding a solution to this problem. An appeal to the charity of the world on behalf of this vast number of unfortunate men, women and children should, we feel, be received in a spirit of humanity and true charity by all members of the United Nations. I use the word "charity" in its broadest sense. It is right that those who can afford to help should be ready to help in cases of distress and difficulty. The word, however, has broader implications. Charity includes humane considerations in the broadest sense. Charity includes justice, but does not press for the last measure of justice. It includes conciliation and goodwill, forgiveness of past injuries and the will and desire for enemies as well as

friends to work together in the common interests of humanity. We think it is right to join with those countries which have appealed to the countries most directly concerned for an even greater degree of co-operation in finding a solution to this problem. Certain speakers have stressed that the only real and just solution to this problem is the repatriation of all the refugees to their homes and have referred to the generous aid they have given in assisting the refugees. Without abandoning any question of principle as to the right of the refugees to repatriation, we think it is nevertheless fair to urge an even greater measure of co-operation from the host countries in carrying through the implementation of such projects as will enable as large a number of refugees as possible to become self-supporting. We must also appeal to Israel to consider this problem with the same truly charitable outlook. To permit the refugee problem to continue as an insoluble problem is to continue a festering sore which may bring great evil in the future. Any generous act which Israel can do towards solution of this problem in whole or in part will be rewarded a hundredfold.

This delegation has been happy to note the good results which have followed from the addition to the Advisory Committee of Egypt, Jordan and Syria. We will be happy to support that part of the joint resolution which authorizes the Advisory Commission to increase its membership by not more than two additional members and we welcome the interest which Lebanon has expressed in being represented upon the Commission.

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NOTE: The Ad Hoc Committee of the eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly passed the following resolution dealing with Palestine Refugees. The vote was 46 in favour (including Canada), none against and five abstentions (Soviet bloc countries).

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

RECALLING its resolutions 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949, 393 (V) of 2 December 1950, 513 (VI) of 26 January 1952 and 614 (VII) of 6 November 1952,

HAVING EXAMINED the report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/2470) and the special report of the Director and the Advisory Commission of that Agency (A/2470/Add.1),

NOTING that programme agreements envisaging the commitment of approximately \$120 million have been signed by UNRWA with the governments of several Near Eastern countries, pursuant to the plan endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 513 (VI), but that expectations as regards the execution of the projects programme have not been realized,

NOTING also that the situation of the refugees continues to be a matter of grave concern,

1. DECIDES, without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III), or to the provisions of paragraph 4 of resolution 393 (V), that the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East shall be extended until 30 June 1955, and that its programme shall be again subject to review at the ninth session of the General Assembly;

2. AUTHORIZES the Agency to adopt a budget for relief amounting to \$24.8 million for the fiscal year ending 30 June 1954, subject to such adjustments as may be attributable to refugee employment on projects, or as may be necessary to maintain adequate standards, and to adopt a provisional budget of \$18 million for the fiscal year ending 30 June 1955;

3. CONSIDERS that the projects fund previously authorized by the General Assembly in paragraph 2 of resolution 513 (VI) should be maintained at \$200 million until 30 June 1955, and urges UNRWA and the governments of the Near Eastern countries concerned to continue to seek acceptable projects to enable the fund to be utilized for the purposes for which it is intended;

4. REQUESTS the Negotiating Committee for Extra-budgetary Funds to seek the funds required to meet the current needs of the relief programmes and to invite governments to take into account the need for the additional pledges which will be required to meet the total programme now established at \$292.8 million.

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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

HAVING NOTED that the present membership of the Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, established pursuant to paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949, is composed of representatives of Egypt, France, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America,

NOTING FURTHER that it is in the general interest that other contributing countries join the Advisory Commission,

AUTHORIZES the Advisory Commission to increase its membership by not more than two additional members.

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NOTING also that the situation of the refugees continues to be a matter of grave concern,