



## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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Address by the Honourable L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Seventh International Conference of Social Work, Toronto, Sunday, June 27, 1954

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The most pleasant part of my task tonight is to extend in the name of the Government of Canada a most cordial welcome to the members of this great International Conference of Social Work. I am sure that I speak not only for the Government, but for all the people of Canada, when I say to our distinguished visitors from other lands and continents how keenly we appreciate the honour you have paid to our country in selecting Canada for this, the seventh meeting of your world-wide organization.

This is not, of course, the first occasion on which Canada has had the pleasure of acting as host to important international gatherings; but never before have we had the opportunity of providing the meeting place for the deliberations of leaders of social welfare movements in so many lands. I join with all Canadians in wishing for you a Conference rich in profit and in inspiration and a visit filled with pleasant experiences and associations.

Two years ago, this Conference met in Madras in India, a vast country half a world away in distance, but closely bound to us in common ties of friendship and of brotherhood. The International Conference could hardly have chosen two countries of greater contrasts for its successive meetings. What a difference between the 400 million peoples of that storied land, with its ancient cultures, and the wide but sparsely populated expanses of Canada, with its mere 15 million persons scattered over half a continent, and many of these relatively recent arrivals here!

There is, perhaps, an appropriate symbolism in the choice of Canada for your meeting place to follow after India. It was barely 450 years ago that Canada -- and indeed the whole Continent of North America -- was discovered and explored by intrepid voyagers from Europe seeking across the oceans to the West a passage to India. I would like to think that, here in this city of Toronto in this year of 1954, Canada will once again prove to be a land of discovery for the new explorers of the Twentieth Century; that here the social explorers from the East and from the West will find a common meeting ground for new approaches that may widen the frontiers of social welfare; and that like the earlier explorers to this continent, each of you returning to your homes in Asia or in Latin America or in Europe may carry back with you new

knowledge and appreciations, which will lay the basis for great advances in the future and will provide a common passage to international understanding.

The nations of the world, through their membership in the United Nations and through their adherence to the principles of its Charter, have pledged themselves to a common effort not only to advance the cause of peace, but also to promote the social and economic betterment of all member nations and of the peoples which comprise them. There is an awareness today as never before in the world's history of the importance of international effort in the economic, social, health and cultural fields as a means of achieving the political goals and objectives which we, the nations and peoples of the world, have established for ourselves.

My own country has shown its consistent faith in the values of international collaboration in these fields through its support of programmes for social progress and the achievement of human rights; through its participation in and active support of the work of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, of UNICEF, the Social Commission, the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, UNESCO, the Food and Agricultural Organization, and other bodies; through its support of Technical Assistance Programmes under United Nations auspices and under the Commonwealth's own Colombo Plan; and through its continuing interest in the development of economic and social collaboration within the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Your countries, like mine, have demonstrated their faith in the positive results that can be achieved through collaboration by governments and by voluntary national and international associations in undertakings of the kind to which I have referred.

One of the common characteristics of the social welfare movement in virtually all countries is the high degree of partnership developed between public agencies on the one hand and private welfare organizations on the other. Social welfare leaders in all of our countries have long recognized the value of such co-operation.

What we have learned on the national level through experience in this co-operative effort, we are now beginning to apply in the field of international social action. One of the most promising areas for future collaboration at the international level, lies, I believe, precisely in the relationship now established between intergovernmental action provided by the various organs of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies on the one hand, and the collaboration of private international agencies, such as the International Conference of Social Work itself, on the other.

Now let me turn to the subject of our discussion this evening. You have chosen as the general theme for your deliberations this year SELF-HELP and COOPERATIVE ACTION in social welfare. You could hardly have chosen a more appropriate topic for discussion within the context of the undertakings carried on during the past

few years under international auspices in the social and economic fields. The whole basis on which we have developed through the United Nations a programme of international economic and social co-operation has been the fundamental premise that peoples everywhere must do what they can for themselves before expecting others to assist them.

With that as a starting point, however, the international community, through the United Nations, has recognized that in large areas of the world there is a serious lag in social, health, educational and economic development; that this lag stands as a threat to the wellbeing - indeed to the peace - of the entire world community; and that this lag cannot be overtaken without some form of international assistance to supplement the maximum effort which can be made by individual nations themselves.

Self-help is the foundation of sound philanthropy. But self-help alone is not enough.

Much as we all cherish the view that peoples should lift themselves to independence and self-sufficiency by their own boot straps, we know that today many can hardly reach their boot straps without help from their more fortunate neighbours. Realization of this fact lies behind and motivates what is being done today through the United Nations to ensure a better balance of opportunity and a more equitable distribution of the fruits of world progress among all peoples.

The diverse achievements of the United Nations in the economic, social and humanitarian fields touch upon almost every aspect of human endeavour. The programme of Technical Assistance to Underdeveloped Countries, initiated in 1950, has far-reaching implications for all humanity. This programme and related projects outside the United Nations represent the beginning of a vast and constructive effort designed to assist countries which are retarded in material development to make better use of their own resources for the improvement of their own living standards. Such programmes are not simply acts of charity. They are investments in prosperity and progress in which all will share.

Moreover, the maintenance of peace in the world today is closely related to this great work of social and economic development. While peace and freedom for all peoples must be the primary international political objective, progress toward this goal can be made meaningful for countless millions of our fellow men and women only if it opens up to them and their children new or enlarged opportunities for better health, improved standards of living and a greater measure of individual and family wellbeing. Few can live peacefully on the verge of subsistence.

As we consider in the meetings of this Conference how best we can apply the related principles of self-help and co-operative action for the improvement of the social wellbeing of the world's peoples, it will be worth while to consider the kind of world society we have evolved to date.

We think of ourselves as living in the Twentieth Century, and for most of us here this evening, the simple, unthinking use of that expression conjures up the picture of a modern, streamlined, industrial society, - basing our assumptions on the kind of progress we have achieved and the patterns of society we have developed in the countries of Western Europe, North America and Australasia.

But we must not forget that the Twentieth Century means different things to different peoples; and that well over half of the world's peoples today in mid-century live under conditions of poverty, illiteracy, ill-health and underdevelopment which we of the western world could not possibly recognize as characteristic of our Twentieth Century society. We who live in the western countries of Europe and in North America are all too prone to think of others as having been created in our own prosperous image. We do not stop to realize that at least so far as the material things of life are concerned, we are the fortunate few among the peoples of the world.

We think of poverty, pestilence, illiteracy, of famine, starvation, and epidemic as vanishing phenomena hovering obscurely along the fringes of our prosperous society. Many of us bask in the genial warmth of the illusion that this attractive situation is general. Only occasionally, through our visits to foreign lands or through some fleeting glimpse of the hard facts of life in the continents of Africa, Latin America and Asia, do we begin to become aware that for the majority of its inhabitants this earth is hazardous and forbidding.

The actual picture of the world we live in is reflected in the first United Nations Report on the World Social Situation. This report shows that millions of human beings are ravaged by diseases which modern medical science could readily control. It shows that all too little progress has been made throughout the world as a whole in the struggle against illiteracy and ignorance, despite some notable advances recently in certain areas. It shows that for many of the less-developed countries the principle of universal education, - which we in the western world have long since taken for granted, - is tragically beyond the financial means of the governments and peoples concerned.

The report shows all too clearly how uneven has been the progress that has been made against poverty, how wide the gap between the rich and the poor nations in the general levels of production and consumption, - a gap that has widened, not narrowed, in the years since World War II. It reveals also that the disparity between the well-fed and the poorly-fed populations of the world has also widened, and that food production has increased less than population in many parts of the world.

The obstacles and difficulties in the way of dealing with these problems could be massive under ideal conditions. But the gigantic task confronting the less-developed countries as they struggle to improve themselves must be accomplished under the tremendous conflicting pressures of the cold war; under the fear of domination from abroad, and of subversive movements designed to make nationalist and social-reform movements the creatures of totalitarian imperialism.

These problems, of course, are not new; but they confront the people and the nations of the world with a new challenge, and viewed in the context of the world affairs, they assume larger significance than ever before. They bear directly on the vital issue of peace, the preservation of fundamental liberties, the development of modern society, and the survival of the United Nations as an effective force in human affairs.

Moreover, long centuries of poverty, ill-health and deprivation have raised disturbing questions in the minds of ordinary men and women in many continents as to whether without the sacrifice of normal human values to totalitarian control and ruthlessness they can ever hope to achieve a reasonably adequate measure of economic and social progress.

Uncertainty about the future course of the peoples of the less-developed areas is one of the most explosive factors in the cold war, - a struggle not confined to developed countries. As more than half of the world's population and the bulk of its strategic resources are in these underdeveloped areas, the stakes at issue are clearly vital to the security and the wellbeing of us all. Failure to realize the importance of this problem - or unwillingness to face the realities of this evolving situation in the world today - could threaten the security and freedom of us all.

We who live in the more prosperous parts of the world cannot take from this situation even the short-sighted consolation of thinking that we are immune from the effects of this poverty and deprivation which is the daily lot of most of the world's people.

Speaking in St. Louis, Missouri, just four years ago this month, the Prime Minister of Canada put it this way:

"Two world wars should have taught us all in North America that we cannot shut ourselves off from the fate of the rest of mankind: that there is no safety in isolation: that we are our brothers' keepers: that the hope of preserving our own free civilization lies in keeping freedom and civilization alive and flourishing throughout the world."

To this, Mr. St. Laurent added something that we would do well to remember in these days when world tensions frequently give birth to unreasonable and unreasoning fears which sometimes find expression in the curtailment of freedom in countries which rightly are proud of their free institutions and traditions. He said: "If we are to preserve civilization, we must first remain civilized; if we are to preserve freedom, we must allow others to remain free."

Terence, the Latin playwright, wrote 2000 years ago: "Nothing that affects humanity can I consider alien from myself." In later years, the English poet of metaphysics, John Donne, put it differently: "No man", he wrote, "is an island entire of itself. Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea,

Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in all mankind." If this was true of the distant and divided world of which Donne wrote four centuries ago, how much more true is it today!

This interdependence of our world, this utter reliance of one part of our humanity upon each other part, this inability to extricate ourselves from the fate and fortune of our fellow human beings, is the central fact of our society and of our life upon this globe today.

What then does this mean in terms of the obligations falling upon the various parts of our interdependent society? It gives, I suggest, to each of our communities, nations and people a special obligation for mutual aid and co-operation, though obviously it will differ in extent and degree according to the nature of the fortunes we enjoy.

Certainly this fact of interdependence places upon the favoured peoples of the world the obligation to remember what they owe to other nations and people less fortunate than themselves.

As Franklin Roosevelt once said:

"It is literally true that the self-supporting man or woman has become as extinct as the man of the stone age. Without the help of thousands of others, any one of us would die, naked and starved. Consider the bread upon our table, the clothes upon our backs, the luxuries that make life pleasant; how many men worked in sunlit fields, in dark mines, in the fierce heat of molten metal, and among the looms and wheels of countless factories to create them for our use and enjoyment."

The advanced stage of our social wellbeing today in North America and in Western Europe is the product of a rich and great inheritance in which we have been able to draw upon all the cultures of the past and all the resources of the world in which we live.

The fact that certain nations and peoples have been able to build upon the foundations of these discoveries a more healthy and prosperous society than certain others, does not diminish but rather increases the obligation resting upon them to share with the less favoured peoples and societies the benefits and the dividends of their social progress.

The cornerstone of principle upon which the policies of the United Nations in the social welfare field are based is this belief, which provides the impetus and inspiration for the programmes of international action in the social field. These international health and social welfare programmes, coupled with technical and other forms of assistance are helping to drive back slowly, but I hope surely, the hideous giants of disease and ignorance and poverty in the less-developed lands.

No one would say that enough is yet being done along these lines to satisfy the conscience of our common human brotherhood or to meet the appalling need that has been revealed through the United Nations Report on the World Social Situation, and through the studies of UNESCO, ILO, WHO, FAO and other groups. We can, however, agree that now, for the first time, we are establishing new and powerful channels for international collaboration and mutual aid in the fields of health, education and social welfare to help narrow the great gaps and distances that divide and separate the various areas of the world.

But, of course, it is not enough in this interdependent world society in which we live to consider only the obligations of the more fortunate peoples to their less-privileged brothers. The obligations of self-help, and of establishing social and economic justice, rest upon these peoples and nations for whose benefit these new programmes of technical assistance and co-operative action have been established.

I am convinced that the success of the efforts we are now making through mutual aid and international co-operation to assist the economic development of the less materially advanced peoples will not primarily depend, in any sound analysis, on how much the more favoured nations can provide to help them. It will depend far more on two factors which, in the final result, are within the control of the peoples of the underdeveloped countries themselves. No amount of help from the outside can really achieve effective results unless the recipient peoples and nations are first prepared to put forth a supreme and sustained effort to do everything within their power to help themselves. This means the fullest possible utilization, for the common good of all the people in the country, of all their own resources and skills, including administrative ability. Secondly, there must be intelligent social utilization, domestically through the most enlightened means available, of the additional help that comes from the outside.

Without a solid and enduring foundation of self-help, the fine superstructure of cooperative action and technical assistance that is now building through the United Nations will stand on shifting sands.

Recognition of the importance of a full measure of self-help, as well as co-operative action, to the achievement of success in our total effort towards social progress is, of course, a long-established axiom of our individual family and community life. In all of our countries, social welfare systems and educational programmes have been established to assist the individual and his family in their efforts to create and maintain the kind of life in which each person can find the fullest opportunity for self-development and self-expression.

Responsible social welfare programmes have never been designed to supplant the effort which must be put forward first of all by the individual himself, his family and his immediate community. No social welfare system could survive in any nation if it had as its end result the destruction or serious diminution of individual initiative and incentive. Our social

welfare programmes within our respective nations are, in effect, community or national systems of mutual aid by which we pool our domestic resources to supplement, where necessary, the efforts of the individual through self-help to find his normal place in our society.

If this be true of our closely-knit family structure, of our community and national life where the sense of mutual brotherhood and interdependence, of being bound together in common fortune or misfortune, has for centuries been part of the life blood of our culture and our traditions, how much more true must it be of the world society which we are now considering, and of the international social welfare efforts by which the nations of the world are endeavouring together to provide a measure of mutual aid to supplement the self-help efforts of the less developed peoples!

This plant of international co-operation in the social welfare field which we are nurturing and feeding, is a young and tender growth. It has not yet taken firm and solid root in the minds and hearts and consciences of the peoples of the world. It is all the more important, therefore, for the success of our common, world-wide effort to achieve social progress, that the peoples of the less-developed countries realize and fulfil their obligation to achieve the maximum of progress through their own initiative and resources in order to ensure that mutual aid and technical assistance - the obligation of the more favoured nations - will be continued and extended to the benefit of all concerned.

The stakes at issue today are as high as they have ever been for all humanity. Abraham Lincoln fought for a united nation on the firm belief that his country could not exist half slave and half free. In our day, we can hardly expect a high degree of international unity so long as the peoples of the world continue to exist half slave and half free. Starvation and pestilence and ignorance cannot afflict the millions of Africa, Asia and Latin America without casting their blight also on those parts of the world where the institutions of political and social democracy have flourished and which have achieved the highest degree of economic and social advance.

The favoured nations of the world cannot afford to ignore the fact that one half of the world's inhabitants live in areas where hunger, disease, poverty and human misery are the daily lot of all the people. They cannot continue to live comfortably, in the knowledge that one out of every two persons alive today is simply not getting enough to eat; that one person in eight suffers from malaria; that infant death rates in some sections of some countries rise as high as 400 for every thousand children born.

These are ugly, dangerous facts about the Twentieth Century which so often has been heralded as an age of social progress. They have all too obvious implications.

The conscience of millions of men and women have in recent years been aroused to work towards creating a happier, more prosperous, and better world



for all. As modern science and technology have drawn the different parts of the globe more closely together, a far-reaching change in outlook has been taking place. To an extent which might have seemed inconceivable even fifty years ago, there has now come increasing recognition that the hundreds of millions of people throughout the world today must somehow contrive to share among themselves less unevenly the ability to use the resources of the earth; that the general impoverishment of any area is a matter of concern to all areas; and that the technical experience and knowledge acquired in rapidly changing industrialized societies have somehow, through our collective efforts, to be made available to those communities that are less advanced and less well equipped.

Arnold Toynbee has suggested that "the Twentieth Century will be chiefly remembered by future generations not as an era of political conflicts or technical inventions, but as an age in which human society dared to think of the welfare of the whole human race as a practical objective". This is an exciting idea. If governments and peoples can accept this possibility, this challenge; if they can recognize in time the interests not merely of their own communities but of the world in which these communities exist; if they can pool their common efforts through self-help and co-operative action to further the advance of all peoples everywhere, then, and only then, will we be able to look forward to a time when peace and security and progress will be something more than mere words.

For in such accomplishment, in such achievement, in such recognition of the mutual interdependence of our world society, in such fulfilment of our obligations of self-help and co-operative action to promote our common betterment, we will give new life and meaning to the inspiring words which are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and will demonstrate our firm resolve "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

The conversion of these words into reality is the supreme challenge of our times.

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