

Canadian Internationalism and Education

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On April 2nd, 1969, the Canadian House of Commons received a report about the External Aid program which revealed in part that in no year, between 1964 and 1969, had expenditures reached the level of parliamentary appropriations and authorizations. The discrepancies had been of the order of \$73.5 millions in 1965; \$71.0 millions in 1966; \$65.7 millions in 1967; and \$101.7 millions in 1968. These unexpended funds represented approximately 20% of the total of appropriations for both bilateral and multilateral programs, for in no year was the total appropriated more than \$317.5 millions.

Why the unexpended funds when Parliament and the people of Canada recognize the need for external aid? Are the purse-strings being held too tight? Is the professional element being strangled by the political? Is red-tape playing an overly important part in the process? These and a host of other questions need to be asked and answered in order to arrive at any kind of responsible explanation for a discrepancy that is as large as it is serious.

There is no one of reasonable persuasion who would not recognize that the task of meeting the development needs of some seventy countries is gargantuan. Therefore these unexpended funds pose a question in the face of the avowed aim to raise Canada's level of aid to 1% of our G.N.P. But this is in reality only symptomatic of a whole series of matters related to Canada's attempt to have its international efforts become both visible and viable.

There are indeed two large classes of problems which need attention, the one having to do with manpower, money and materials for the external domain, the other having to do with reality, recognition and research in the internal domain. If there is to be any rational development of Canada's international commitments, then it is essential that rationality be spelled out carefully in both the external and internal dimensions. In essence, there can be no satisfactory external program without an equally satisfactory internal base.

Reality

The first leg of the base is reality. Every international educational program ought to be based upon a realistic assessment of its value to the host country. Given any number of possible programs, which will prove to be most valuable to the country and its people? If there be a choice as between, say, a technical school and a community social centre, then upon what basis is the choice to be made? What set of priorities should be brought into play? It is essential that both long and short term goals be defined and alternative plans for each outlined in some detail. The systematic analysis of the procedures to be followed for each set of goals ought to be given careful consideration long in advance of implementation.

There is always the temptation to idealize situations and circumstances and to set goals in terms of those ideals when in actual fact there is little chance of their attainment. The disappointments and disillusionments consequent upon failures are doubly serious in developing countries and can easily lead to unhealthy reactions by donor and recipient alike.

In brief, the need to be realistic in all aid programs is accentuated by the fact that, both historically and culturally, developed societies have a patronizing aura about them that needs to be muted. No recipient of aid is ever reconciled to being the object of charity, and however the gift may be wrapped in the trappings of self-help, it is not possible to escape the aura itself. To be realistic, therefore, is to reduce so far as possible the likelihood of failure by setting sights that are more likely to be attained than not.

Recognition

A second condition in the internal realm which needs to be satisfied is recognition. Interested personnel in schools, colleges

and universities are invited to offer to go abroad to serve in professional capacities. All too often though, these same schools, colleges and universities will not ensure that personnel do not lose promotion, tenure, salary or other forms of recognition. Educational institutions willing to grant leaves of absence for men and women to serve abroad must assure their professional interests. To do otherwise, as too many do now, is to ask people to sacrifice their careers at home for the sake of one or two years abroad. It is about time that this parochial approach to education gave way to the universal.

Not enough recognition is afforded people who are prepared to serve overseas. Red carpets are rolled out when there is need to recruit individuals. The carpet often becomes threadbare or is rolled up out of the way once the candidate has agreed to serve. It is not long before the educator abroad begins to feel that perhaps the folks back home are on another planet and those who so recently sought his favor have lost interest. There can be no greater discouragement to would-be volunteers than the knowledge that those who were called upon before were given short shrift. If Canada's international educational development is to be signally advanced, then it is absolutely essential that men and women in the field are given all of the recognition to which they are entitled. Without this recognition, the sources of inspired service can only disappear in an uncaring and uncommitted mediocrity.

Research

A third essential condition for the successful development of an international educational policy is the establishment of an adequate research base for any and every program. Too many programs are developed on the basis of opinion and a minimum of experience. While more universities and colleges have been called upon to engage in research relevant to international problems and projects, much more can still be done. Industry has provided ample evidence that research into product development and promotion pays off handsomely and external aid programs could readily benefit to the same extent. As the cost of providing assistance abroad increases, so does the necessity for relevant research. Some programs, of course, cannot wait upon research findings to guide their development and this is understandable. On the other hand, there are many

others where research is possible and ought to be initiated.

Manpower

The selection of the right men and women for service abroad is admittedly crucial to the success of any overseas project. The various Canadian agencies engaged in placing personnel in overseas positions have been refining their selection procedures so that, on balance, there has been a remarkable improvement over the years. Nevertheless, too often the volunteer has provided the bulk of the personnel resources, and recruitment has been limited to selecting from this pool. Maurice Strong's innovation of going out and identifying people in the business community needed and capable of contributing to overseas aid, represented an active departure from passive practices.

Dependence upon the volunteer has for long obscured the need for criteria of selection, but as the net has had to be cast more widely, it becomes increasingly clear that it is important to refine methods of assessing the temperament, disposition, purposes, attitudes and viewpoints of those who are to serve abroad. In a way each man or woman serving abroad needs to be as carefully assessed as a diplomat in the traditional foreign service, for in essence each is an ambassador.

Money

An important ingredient of every international education program is money. All too often, however, the success or failure of a project is judged by the amount of money expended when in fact the amount itself may be a negligible factor. Indeed small sums have produced great results while great sums have been wasted. Again, a significant factor in the success of an overseas project may well be the overall attitude towards money manifested by those engaged in serving abroad. Too much emphasis on the money side of a project may indeed suggest to the host country that there is a distortion of values inimical to the country's best interests.

The sophisticated use of money to be found in developed societies does not always provide the best guide to expenditures in a developing society. Where social and political values are different, it may indeed be hazardous to emphasize the financial aspect of

any project at the expense of the goals to be achieved. Where aspirations are geared to achieving parity with a Western society, the place of money may very well be given second or third consideration. As long as the West continues to expend large sums in armaments, there is little that can reasonably be said about overexpenditure on a peaceful project in a developing society. Not money but humanity is the benchmark of progress and this must be kept to the fore in all international development programs.

Materials

In addition to manpower and money, there is the need to provide materials of one kind and another. In the field of education textbooks, audio-visual aids, equipment, and materials of similar sort will be called for. Although much of this material is today adapted to the particular and special needs of the local culture and community, there are still too many instances when materials are introduced that have relatively little meaning to the local students. Considerable progress has been made in the preparation of textbooks suitable to the needs of the community but much, much more needs to be done. The use of native materials and ideas could go far to bridging the gap between what is introduced from abroad and what is needed locally. It is now becoming apparent that, whether written or not, there is much in the history and culture of each developing country that can provide a sound bridgehead for modern industry, education and technology. Good use of this bridgehead depends upon an awareness of the sensitivity to and appreciation of the material and spiritual values present in the host culture. Materials in and of themselves exert an influence which needs to be modified by the personnel concerned with them.

It is becoming increasingly important for Canada's educational contributions abroad to become an integral part of Canada's total foreign policy. While Canada's international peace-keeping efforts have attracted world attention and while Canada's place in international trade and commerce has also been firmly established, it is to Canada's advantage to give books and pupils a higher international priority than bombs and planes. The curious half-hearted habit of appropriating funds for international education and then not spending them must be replaced by vigorous efforts to spend more and do more.