

NOTES FOR REMARKS BY

IVAN L. HEAD

TO THE

CONFERENCE ON DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

JULY 7, 1983



ARCHIV
HEAD
ND, 38

IDRC-doc-364

I thank you for giving to me an opportunity to come to this place to speak to this conference. It was in Calgary that my education began. It's a special pleasure, therefore, to be able to return and to reflect on the role of education in development. Like so many other subjects, this one assumes differing dimensions depending on the position of the observer.

When I was a little boy growing up in this city, my horizons were necessarily limited, for the depression kept people close to home. Of two directions, however, I was certain. If I passed the intersection at the corner, and walked up the hill at the end of our street, I'd come sooner or later to the United States. And if I dug straight down, and kept at it, I would emerge in China. Much later, when I began traveling to each of those countries, I chose to get there by slightly more orthodox routes.

From great depression to world recession has taken half a century, give or take. A myriad of accomplishment has marked those years, some of it of great benefit, some of it of frightening potential damage, all of it changing our lifestyle with bewildering speed: colour cinematography, nylon, television, nuclear fission and nuclear fusion, lasers, contact lenses, space rocketry, oral contraceptives, computers, jet propulsion,

recombinant DNA, micro-wave ovens. The list goes on and on. The pervasive factor in the list is the dominance of the natural and physical sciences, and the relatively modest role of the social sciences.

My catalogue is far from complete, of course, and should extend to embrace such phenomena as the frequency of wars - large and small, widespread and local - and the emergence into the international community of more than 100 newly independent states. Such an expanded list only amplifies my concern, however, and underlines my message. We, and all human beings, live in an age in which change is often the only constant, yet we find ourselves woefully short of institutions able or willing adequately to prepare us for change, or to contribute to the adjustments made necessary by change. Viewed in that light, education takes on a dimension and an urgency that should place it foremost among the concerns of all governments.

No part of the world, certainly no part known to me, is unaffected by events elsewhere be they of an economic, social, ecological or military nature. Yet how often do we retreat into a cocoon of indifference or, worse, of misplaced superiority: "But that forest depletion and soil erosion is taking place, after all, in the Himalayan foothills!" "Sure there are problems

in Central America, but the United States will take care of them." "Of course the economies of the developing countries are in desperate shape, but we have our own economic difficulties that have to be set straight first." Etc., etc. Not fibre optics, contour sheets nor anti-biotics have eliminated the ostrich syndrome to which a Canadian delegate to the League of Nations referred in 1924 when he stated that "... in this Association of Mutual Insurance against fire, the risks assumed by the different States are not equal. We live in a fire-proof house, far from inflammatory materials."

Disastrous as was that attitude six decades ago, its continuance in any form today is frightening beyond description.

- Earth-orbiting satellites in non-geosynchronous station pass over us with routine frequency, some of them equipped with an imagery competence so refined as to be able to record numbers on license plates on parked automobiles.
- So severe is the shortage of fuelwood in many regions that reputable scientists forecast the destruction of fully one-half of the planet's forest cover by the year 2000 should present rates of depletion continue.

- The global trading system is so universal in its application that developing countries, in aggregate, import by value a volume of goods significant when compared with that of any single industrialized trading group. The United States sells twice as much to the developing countries as it does to the European Community; that community sells three times as much to the developing countries as it does to the USA.
- 2,4-D residues were found in the body fat of penguins in Antarctica as early as 1970; Antarctica is at least 2,000 kilometres distant from the closest possible source.
- The flight time of a submarine-launched ballistic missile is much less than 30 minutes from launch station to target in continental North America.
- The world's population - 4 billion now - will increase to 6 billion by the end of the century, this notwithstanding a current infant mortality of 40,000 per day worldwide, and the fact that more than 100 countries are not now self-sufficient in food production. The first billion of world population, by

the way, was not reached until 1800; the second was added 130 years later. The third billion took only 30 years, the fourth billion 15 years, from 1960 to 1975.

Not all of these circumstances fall into the North-South, or developmental, context. Not one, however, is not influenced by that perspective.

What are our chances of concluding this century in circumstances not more unpleasant or disorderly than those in which we find ourselves today? I frankly don't know. In our ability to do so, I am reasonably confident; in our willingness to sustain the intellectual and physical discipline necessary to do so, I am far from optimistic. As a minimum, we must exhibit a desire to understand the issues. Here, education, in its broadest definition, is a vital ingredient. Equally as we demand, or should, a curriculum of quality for our children in their formal schooling, so is there a responsibility upon us to insist that the news media - and particularly newspapers - deal responsibly, comprehensively, and coherently with complicated international issues. Persons far more distinguished than I have noted recently how abysmally low they regard the treatment at present of international relations and foreign policy in the press of this country.

There is little excuse for this; either for the low-quality of the information services or for our unwillingness to demand an improvement. Canada, after all, is one of the nations in the world most dependent on foreign trade; 25 cents out of every dollar in circulation here is derived from the sale abroad of goods and services. Disruption of our traditional markets, or the absence of buying power in potential growth regions in the developing world, lead to devastating consequences upon our economy. We are a member of OECD which, until recently, enjoyed a massive net inflow or surplus in balance of payments - in the tens of billions of dollars - with the developing countries. We shared as well in the benefits which flowed from the creation of some 5 million new jobs in the North between 1973 and 1977 as a result of exports to the South. Our economy, our standard of living, depends in large measure on events and circumstances beyond our territory. Yet how many Canadians are given the opportunity to learn these facts and to contemplate on their effects on Canadian well-being? Not nearly enough, I dare say.

Our peculiar proximity to the United States demands of us a special thoughtfulness as well. We are one of only eight countries in the world that has a land border with a single neighbour; three of those, however, are parts of islands: Papua New Guinea, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Of the others -

Lesotho, Portugal, Denmark, South Korea (and, until recently, The Gambia) - in one way or another are all quite distinct in social, linguistic or other centripetal factors from their neighbour. Canada, by comparison, has as its sole continental neighbour the most culturally pervasive, the most powerful military and economic nation in the history of the world. Quite obviously, the policies and interests of that country are not always shared by Canada. In our country's proper belief that we have responsibilities beyond our shores, we must manage in the first instance one of the most all-embracing and delicately balanced bilateral relationships found anywhere. We cannot afford simply to take for granted this long standing friendly relation.

Canada is in many respects an orphan state. We are the only major industrialized nation that does not enjoy protected entry of its goods into a market of 100 million persons or more. We occupy the world's second largest land-mass with the world's longest coast-line and, in area, possess the world's second largest continental shelf and biggest exclusive economic zone. Our nearest northern neighbour is the Soviet Union, the world's other super-power. Yet our small population makes it physically impossible for us either to consume all that we produce or to protect ourselves physically by military means even if we were to

dedicate virtually the entire federal budget to defense expenditures.

These, and other equally complex circumstances, will not disappear simply because Canadians are indifferent to them. Nor will resolutions appear magically at the behest of a Pied Piper playing a single-purpose tune. It is absolutely necessary in our own interest that in this country we be given access to the materials which will acquaint us with those issues, and that we take the time to become familiar with them. There is no shortage of evidence in Canada, some of it of recent origin and close to this city, which illustrates the willingness of some persons to interpret historic events on the basis of any aberrant theory that comforts their twisted minds. There is no shortage, either, of knee jerk interpreters of international events. Each tempts the confused and the weary with a simple explanation, often as bereft of factual insight as it is bristling with single-dimension solutions.

There is little chance for this country or for the other industrialized democracies to navigate wisely and effectively a course through the turbulent waters before us if we do not have continuing access to information about the complexity

and the pervasiveness of international issues, and of the oft-competing or even incompatible nature of different desirable options.

Canada is a country that can prosper, indeed can exist, only in an environment governed by rules, not by force. We have no option but to assume our responsibilities as a member of international organizations, and work diligently toward rational, equitable problem solving and conflict avoidance. If we are an odd man, we must ensure that we are an odd man in. To be out, is to be without influence, without protection, without a voice.

It is not by accident that Canada is a strong advocate of a more equitable international trading and financial system, of a more effective international security and arms-control structure, of a more wholesome biosphere. These goals, and especially the first, are not shared by all Canadians, however, as recent political events have revealed. Where advocates of alternative policies base their arguments upon fact, it is a welcome element in the democratic dynamic. Where opposition springs from prejudice or ignorance, however, the need for more effective educational techniques is obvious.

Of the importance and the urgency of this need I haven't the slightest doubt. Nor, presumably, do you as evidenced by your presence at this welcome conference. By emphasizing the need for development education in Canada, one should not conclude, however, that an equally necessary task does not cry out for attention in the developing countries as well. From the perspective of the South, life in the industrialized world appears overwhelmingly attractive, unquestionably superior, and irresistably seductive. We should not be surprised, therefore, if developing countries tend to emulate uncritically practices which we are endeavouring to modify or forsake. Without a clearer understanding of the disadvantages which obtain from some of the wasteful lifestyles of countries in the North, the tendency will continue in many parts of the South to emphasize material affluence and economic gain as the supreme goal, urban life as the most desirable, and the accumulation of personal comfort at the expense of the disadvantaged as an acceptable norm.

The interdependence which binds North and South together can become aberrant rather than synergistic if development assistance is not well thought out. It can exacerbate the problems it set out to solve - or create new ones. If, under the guise of development assistance, agricultural inputs are

invested overwhelmingly in cash crops and capital-intensive methods, they may actually contribute to the impoverishment of rural populations by eliminating jobs and further concentrating the wealth in the hands of the few. If capital is invested primarily in the production of staple foodstuffs and these are then exported to the developed world for foreign exchange, the benefits will not, without more, reach the rural poor. And, if inputs are directed and managed with a view to maximizing short-term results and ignoring long-term destruction of the environment, they will more than likely reduce the quality of life of the rural population and threaten its potential for feeding its children.

In a paradoxical way, development education in both North and South would likely be more effective if it were less argumentative. In the North, according to a recent study by the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs, efforts all too often reflect an ideological bias and fail to depict the complexity of issues. In the words of the report, such activities aim more at "converting the public than educating it." In the South, the problem exists as well. There is widespread failure to prepare soundly-based materials. Hortative pronouncements at the United Nations in New York and at international conferences are not credible alternatives to factual, sophisticated, circumstantial

analyses and prescriptive propositions. The Commonwealth Secretary General, Shridath Ramphal (who was a member of both the Brandt and the Palme Commissions), has proposed the creation of a southern OECD to ensure the soundness of methodology and the adequacy of preparation. The proposal has not been universally welcomed. In my judgement, something of the sort is very much needed. Without a qualified mechanism to ensure the balance and the correctness of national statistics, and the intellectual honesty of conclusions derived therefrom, the international community is held hostage to interpretive argument.

Not all development education in either North or South is of an economic or national security nature, of course. A good deal of it is pertinent to individuals. The health and nutrition sectors are good examples. Unless a person knows what circumstances lead to sickness, unless a person realizes that good health is the norm - not an anomaly, better health practices and better health are not likely to evolve in developing regions be they in the South or in Canada. In some parts of the world mothers of small children observe about them such a high incidence of diarrhoea that they believe the condition to be normal. They treat the phenomenon by denying liquids to their children, to "dry them up", likely the worst possible course of action. It is one of the reasons why diarrhoea is far and away the world's leading cause of infant mortality.

It is circumstances such as these that have prompted Dr. Hafdan Mahler, the Director General of the World Health Organization, to say that of all the ingredients of health, education is far and away the most significant, accounting in his judgment for perhaps 70% of the total.

International development education in this country must necessarily elicit changes in how Canadians perceive the world, giving them a clearer and sharper understanding of the interdependence of all the nations of the globe, and a keener appreciation of other cultures and ways of life. It needs, among other things, to counteract the popular and misleading image of the Third World as consisting only of dependent, helpless, and impoverished nations, condemned to beg for their survival. Educational materials should include information about the real and many strengths of Third World nations: their ability to survive in spite of extreme hardships, their great capacity for joy, and their sense of community. There is as well, of course, a need for more analysis of the causes of underdevelopment and of the interdependencies which link North to South: of consumption patterns in the North and food and energy deficiencies in the South, of tariff barriers in some countries and limited buying power in others.

In short, the invaluable pattern of work that the North-South Institute has pioneered in Canada in the past few years needs to be emulated, replicated and vulgarized. That institute has established itself in a remarkably short period of time as a vital Canadian educational resource.

Approached in a non-tendentious fashion, there may be some chance that in both North and South we can depart the altogether too prevalent adversarial, competitive instinct and to approach these issues as joint endeavours, pursuing common goals on a global scale. Quite clearly, there exists today a developmental divide, North on one side, South on the other. This divide reflects the popular mood of indifference now prevalent in the North and the sense of frustration now so evident in the South. To penetrate this divide there is required a measure of human involvement in the North and a measure of human benefit in the South. Of the dire need for both there can be no doubt. All evidence points to the fact that, if present trends continue, the world in the year 2000 will be more crowded, more troubled, less wholesome ecologically, and more vulnerable to economic, social and political disruption than the world we live in at the present.

Nowhere can men and women sit back waiting for forward movement on the part of others. The responsibility is universal and it is singular. We cannot delay for some future time either recognition of the challenges or our responses to them.

Albert Camus had an answer for that temptation. In his novel "The Fall", he wrote: "Don't wait for the Last Judgment. It takes place every day."

None of you are waiting for the last judgment, and I congratulate you on your interest in this compelling subject. Your current efforts to build closer links among yourselves, between the formal and informal sectors of the development education community, and between government and non-governmental institutions are to be applauded. Actors such as the Development Education Coordinating Council in this province have provided important insights into avenues to be pursued. Increasingly, universities in Alberta and elsewhere in Canada are assuming responsibilities in this area while veteran organizations such as the Camrose One World Centre continue their invaluable contribution.

Just as international development is a relatively recent phenomenon, beginning with exercises such as the Colombo Plan in the early fifties, so is international development

education new. The pioneers were church groups, having extensive contacts in the newly independent countries, and recently returned CUSO volunteers. Those early efforts have expanded to an estimated 500 Canadian NGOs that engage to some degree in development education, with 15 Canadian universities now offering programs in this field. One of the major issues you are tackling at this conference, I understand, is the improvement of coordination and cooperation between the NGOs and the universities.

In your efforts these next few days and beyond, I hope that you will not fail to explore ways of reminding Canadians of their own developmental history, of their own frustrated dreams, their mistakes and their successes. Canadians are not strangers to development, and should not be indifferent to it. In the prairie provinces especially, "development", by whatever name employed, has a very real and a very recent meaning. It ill behooves us to point fingers at newly independent countries and be critical of them for errors or for lack of speed in accomplishment. Canadians should know as well as people anywhere the desperately slow progress of frontier communities and their dependence upon outside capital and technical assistance. The capital city of this province had its beginnings as a trading post almost two centuries ago and has been

permanently settled on its present site since 1813. Today it is a flourishing, modern metropolis. Yet one of its principal down-town traffic arteries - 107th Avenue - was not paved until 1948. In the southern part of this province, canny private entrepreneurs determined 100 years ago to move bulk cargos of coal by giant river steamer along the Old Man River from Lethbridge to the then rail-head at Medicine Hat. Non-Albertans in this audience should be told that apart from spring flood there are stretches of that river year-round that can scarcely keep buoyant a row-boat let alone a steamship 173 feet long! The exercise, needless to say, was a spectacular and costly failure. Rural electrification in most of the prairie provinces is a post-World War II accomplishment.

In Winnipeg this spring, at a development conference of scientists and technologists sponsored by IDRC, Dr. Lloyd Barber, President of the University of Regina, delivered an entire speech dedicated to the real, recent and continuing rural development activities in the prairies and of their often similarity to circumstances he has viewed personally in developing countries. These local experiences, Dr. Barber insisted, permit Canadians some sense of identification and empathy with human beings in the South.

The Winnipeg conference, like those sponsored by the Centre in several regions of Canada in recent years, is evidence of our view of our responsibilities within Canada. The primary mandate of IDRC, of course, is the enhancement of scientific competence within the developing countries. We do this by stimulating and supporting research in the institutions there; research which is chosen, conducted, and managed by developing-country scientists themselves. Our policies and programmes are fixed by an international Board of Governors, many of them from developing countries. Yet I believe deeply in the importance, within this country, of a broad-based, aware constituency of Canadians able to understand and debate intelligently development issues. Along with the hazards of nuclear war and environmental deterioration, North-South relations form a trio of critically important issues for the human race between now and the end of this millennium. For that reason the Centre supports a number of initiatives which are designed to contribute to an enhanced awareness by Canadians of the importance to them of the fate of the developing countries. Nearly every university in Canada, for example, has direct on-line access at no charge to IDRC's computerized data bases. Both the Centre's popular and its scientific publications and films are widely distributed within Canada as well as without. We have assisted in the creation of a

development education package for two educational TV networks - Access Alberta and TV Ontario. And in a modest way we are endeavouring to encourage a greater degree of professionalism in the media. IDRC has to date provided fellowships to selected journalists from Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal and Camrose to spend a year in Third World countries studying development.

Yet in all of these respects our contribution must remain only of modest, contributory proportions. The major responsibility for development education in Canada lies with those of you who are dedicated either primarily or principally to that task. I congratulate you on your dedication and offer you every good wish as you prepare here better to pursue your objectives. You will be encouraged, I hope, to know that your standards are shared by one of Canada's greatest educators, Frank Scott. In addition to his roles as an effective teacher and a brilliant scholar, he is one of this country's leading poets. I can think of no more appropriate way to launch you on your undertakings here than to repeat four lines of his poetry:

"The world is my country
The human race is my race
The spirit of man is my God
The future of man is my heaven."