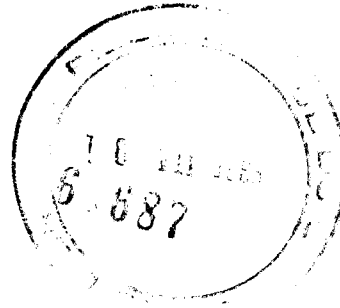


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STATEMENT

BY

IVAN L. HEAD

to the

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

AND NATIONAL DEFENCE

28 May 1985.

APC 410
HEAD,
C/O. 49 E

IRC-450E

Mr. Chairman:

Parliament created IDRC in 1970 with unanimous all party support as a recognition of three perceptions:

- 1) The plight of the developing countries was increasing, to the long-term detriment of the industrialized countries, in political, economic, environmental, and moral terms.
- 2) The development burden of these countries could not be borne primarily, or indefinitely, by the industrialized countries. The developing countries must themselves acquire the competence to solve their own problems.
- 3) The inability of the developing countries to solve - even to identify - many of their problems was due in significant measure to their lack of scientific and technological capacity. Most research was either beyond their ability or not suited to their needs.

Research to increase food production, to promote health, to reduce illiteracy, to address economic dilemmas - little of this was then being done by developing country researchers. Few doubted either the benefits or the long-term nature of such research were it to be effective. After all, the pioneering work of the Rockefeller Foundation in creating the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre in Mexico and the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines was recognized as a critical contribution to the increase of food production in Asia - the so-called "Green Revolution" - which changed India from a desperately food-deficient country in the 1960s to a net food exporter today. That research and necessary extension work occupied more than a quarter of a century - but with a handsome payoff for a relatively modest investment.

During the debate in the House of Commons on the motion for Second Reading, Mr. Alfred Hales, M.P. said:

"I have always been one of those who feels it is far better to teach a man how to grow a bushel of corn than it is to give him the money to purchase

that corn. I hope this is the philosophy of the bill now before us. Anything we can do to encourage and support research in an international sphere such as this should be done."

During that debate, too, Peter Drucker, the well-known American management consultant was quoted. In one of his books, "The Age of Discontinuity", Drucker emphasized the need for sustained research activity, especially in the agricultural sector. Here, biological research is by definition long-term. So are the follow-on activities needed to move the results out of the major research stations and onto the small farms. Wrote Drucker in 1968:

"The main engine of economic growth in the developed countries during the last twenty years has been agriculture. In all these countries (excepting only Russia and the European satellites), productivity on the farm has been increasing faster than in the manufacturing industries. Yet the technological revolution in agriculture had begun well before

1913. Most of the "new" agricultural technology - tractors, fertilizer, improved seeds and breeds - had been around for many years. The "good" farmer of today has just about reached the productivity and output of the "model farm" of 1913."

It was this awareness of the long term, hazardous nature of research that prompted the opposition spokesmen in Committee to re-inforce both the independent and the international character of the Centre to be created by the Bill. There was much discussion of the importance of a Board of Governors that reflected these characteristics as well as scientific competence and developmental experience. And there was emphasis on the need for research that would lead toward self-sufficiency. Gordon Fairweather, M.P., said:

"This, then, surely is the critical issue. If development growth does not overtake population growth the rich nations face the prospect of an intolerable moral crisis by the year 2000. This is a crisis furthermore which cannot be solved by the use of palliatives like food aid."

Successive IDRC Boards have reflected with integrity Parliament's intentions. The independence and unique character of the Centre have prompted some of the world's foremost developmental experts and scientists to accept appointments. The names of some of those Governors may be found in the briefing notes earlier distributed. Successive Boards have insisted that research supported by the Centre be of a practical, applied kind, that it be for the benefit of the poorest segment of the population, that the projects be proposed by developing country scientists and the research be conducted and managed by them so that the benefits remain within the developing country itself. It was the Board that directed the Centre in early days to concentrate its agricultural activities in the semi-arid tropics, largely in Africa. The Centre has pioneered in much work in the Sahel, for example. The only major variation to this central thrust has been collaborative research undertaken jointly by developing country and Canadian scientists in a program begun at the request of the Government of Prime Minister Clark in 1979.

A special responsibility given the Centre by its statute is that of assisting developing countries in the

acquisition, storage and use of scientific materials so that they may keep abreast of the explosive increase in information. As part of that responsibility, the Centre designed and perfected a bibliographic data management system - software - which functions on a mini-computer. It is called MINISIS, and is acknowledged as the most powerful system in the world. This is made available free of charge to developing countries and to public institutions in Canada and some other places. It is sold to the private sector. It is now functioning in Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Thai and five European languages. There are now 125 installations world-wide on 6 continents. MINISIS manages the records, for example, of The World Bank, The International Monetary Fund, the French Senate, the United States Agency for International Development, and several departments of the Government of Canada. It naturally runs IDRC's own data bases. These are available free of charge through our computer to 138 Canadian users, many of them universities.

The Centre functions with a Parliamentary Grant which in the current FY is \$86 million, or 4.11% of ODA.

Measured against the time associated with major research projects in industrialized countries, IDRC is an infant. Its successes have nevertheless already prompted a number of other governments to replicate it to a certain degree in their own countries. Sweden, West Germany, The Netherlands, the United States, and Australia have all created publicly funded research donor organizations. A few years ago IDRC prompted close relations among these entities to ensure cooperation among them. More recently, it has promoted a common, computerized project records system now in operation.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, may I say only that IDRC functions overwhelmingly in the field. As the materials indicate, it has 6 major regional offices in Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. From them and from Ottawa, program staff travel continuously to stimulate and monitor research. These persons are world-quality scientists with extensive developing country experience. Their quality is the envy of every other research funding organization, they are the back-bone of the Centre. I am very proud of them and of IDRC. I know that those Canadians aware of it are equally proud. The Reader's Digest

dedicated an entire article to IDRC a few years ago and entitled it "Foreign Aid, the Do-It-Yourself Way".

Mr. Chairman, my colleagues and I would be pleased to answer members' questions.