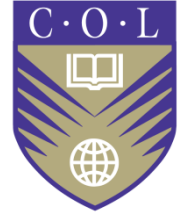


Education and Human Security



Notes for remarks to the Rotary Club of Vancouver

*Terminal City Club,
Vancouver, BC, Canada
2 March 2004*

*By
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1. Tribute to Rotary as one of the most extraordinary international movements of our time. Its strengths are many but three of them stand out.

It transcends all barriers of religion, race, social origin, nationality - to mention only a few.

It is driven by the spirit of service to others.

It is an influential unifying force in a world of divided loyalties

When I was Vice President of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) I was instrumental in supporting many splendid Rotary initiatives and admired the remarkable Rotarians with whom I had the privilege of working.

2. Express gratitude of The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to BC and Vancouver for the wonderfully hospitable welcome that COL has received. COL is the only international inter-governmental organisation located in Vancouver.

The first Commonwealth agency to be located outside Britain.

Origins - 1987 CHOGM - Canada/India (Senator Pat Carney, notable role). Competition strong between several countries who wanted to host COL.

Generosity of Federal and Provincial Governments secured its location in Vancouver. BC Government contributed \$1 million annually to an \$8 million budget, most of which is spent in BC - sound investment. Splendid example of Federal/Provincial cooperation. BC Government cut its contribution but the Federal Government took up the slack - to BC's continuing advantage.

3. We face a mighty educational challenge. Today there are over 100 million children in the world, 60%

of them girls, who never go to school. At least an equivalent number start school but drop out - for economic and other reasons - before they have learned much.

The unschooled children of former generations are today's illiterates. They number about 850 million, 500 million of whom are women and the remaining 350 million men. In today's world one woman in four is illiterate.

There is also some good news. Between 1975 - 98 the number of children in primary school rose from about 500 million to more than 680 million. If this rate of increase continues the number of children in the world's primary schools will rise to about 700 million in 2005 and 770 million in 2015. Most of this will occur, of course, in the developing countries, notably in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

4. Contribution of developing world to education - especially the Islamic world.

The quest for learning is as old as history and it is one in which the Islamic world has played an influential and dynamic role. Arab mathematicians brought our mathematical figures and concepts to Europe. For four centuries Arab medicine was the source of scientific and technological progress in the western world. The once Arab universities of Toledo and Cordoba, where one of the greatest mediaeval Jewish scholars, Moses bin Mamoun had taught, attracted scholars and students from North Africa, the Middle East - and the then under-developed countries like England.

While education was limited to the few at that time, education for all has become one of the imperatives of our age. Fortunately, we now possess the tools to bring about universal education. Using open and distance learning techniques the Allama Iqbal Open University in Pakistan is graduating more men and women of all ages, and from all parts of Pakistan than its four conventional universities combined. The Indira Gandhi National Open University attracts a student population of over one million students in the length and breadth of India. They manifest the significance and the potential of open and distance learning - which not only widen access but enable students to acquire an education without leaving their homes and communities.

5. What is COL doing? ~ Some COL Initiatives

a. In most disadvantaged communities in developing countries where access to television or computers is limited or non-existent, radio is an effective way to reach rural disadvantaged groups. To meet such situations COL has set up solar powered, low cost FM radio stations in four countries:

Uganda (1m)

Papua New Guinea (15,000)

South Africa (200,000)

Sri Lanka (200,000)

These FM stations have prompted governments and funding agencies to recognise the merits of community radio in a low-cost sustainable model.

b. Nigeria must produce 40,000 teachers annually for the next ten years. In response to a request from the Government of Nigeria, COL is assisting that country to re-design its education system. As a result Nigeria has taken significant initiatives not only to re-structure its educational system but also to use open and distance learning to improve the quality of professional development of its teachers.

c. COL's outreach goes far beyond the conventional education sector. For instance, poor management and unhealthy work environments often characterise the workplace for women toiling in Bangladesh's booming export industries. To deal with this situation, COL has devised a self-instructional learning package to improve the management skills of shop-floor managers in the export garment industry. The learning packages have been translated into Bengali, adapted to local conditions and piloted in five factories in Dhaka.

d. In 1991 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Harare realised that good governance is founded on good legislation and good laws must be drafted carefully by well-trained professionals.

COL developed a Distance Education Programme for Legislative Drafters and participants have completed the course in more than twenty Commonwealth jurisdictions.

6. The tragic events of September 11 thrust our world into one of the most perilous periods in history. They have made human security the central issue of our time. They have given new relevance and meaning to education and aid as a shield against the tyranny that terrorism manifests. They remind us that terrorism is rooted in the abject poverty, ignorance and injustice that engulf vast masses of the human family. Poverty and ignorance are the fertile soil that breeds the followers and collaborators of terrorism. Unless we mobilise all our resources and strength to fight the greatest war of all - the battle against global poverty and illiteracy - we will be vulnerable to the destructive forces that poverty, ignorance and injustice release. Canadians can no longer regard Canada's international development programmes, notably those of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) as taking their taxes. They are the soundest investments in our security. International development and education are our country's first line of defence against the forces of terrorism in the turbulent and dangerous age we have entered. This is a time for all Canadians, and especially Rotarians, to support international development and agencies such as COL and CIDA as instruments of human security. For what is at stake is the common future of rich and poor alike.

You in Rotary have always recognised that an educated citizenry is essential for peace and security in our world. The Commonwealth of Learning is engaged in this vital task of building an educated citizenry in the Commonwealth - an extraordinary institution that transformed an empire of subject peoples into a Commonwealth of free nations. I invite you to share in this endeavour - perhaps by offering Rotary/COL Awards in Open and Distance Learning to help train the teachers who are the key to the educational advancement of Commonwealth countries. Or you may prefer to explore some other way to collaborate with COL. We would certainly welcome your cooperation. It is an opportunity for Rotarians to break new

ground, to explore new paths and to fashion initiatives that contribute not only to education but also to human security in our country and around the world.

It is a fitting time for me to speak to you as next Monday, March 8 is Commonwealth Day when we celebrate the accomplishments and recognise the challenges facing the Commonwealth. We invite you to join with us in marking Canada's membership in the Commonwealth