

of the Asiatic nations will achieve in a decade the kind of democracy that it took many centuries for the United Kingdom, France and the other western democracies to achieve. You cannot bring about in that short order that which has been the product of not always successful and wise efforts, but of a process of trial and error that went on over a long period of time and brought about an attitude that changed the form of administration of the European countries from medieval feudalism to popular democracy; and it is not going to be easy to bring that about in any short time, though we possibly now move faster, especially in moving from one physical place to another, than we ever moved previously.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Would the Prime Minister allow a question?

**Mr. St. Laurent (Quebec East):** Certainly.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** He was answering my friend with regard to the matter of whether or not gratuitous advice had been given. Is the Prime Minister in a position to say whether he will reveal the communication that was sent to Sir Anthony Eden in the same way in which the President of the United States, some three hours after having done so, followed a similar course?

**Mr. St. Laurent (Quebec East):** I would be very happy to be able to reveal that correspondence. I noticed in the press the statement made by the hon. gentleman recently to the effect that he was going to ask for that correspondence.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Yes.

**Mr. St. Laurent (Quebec East):** I sent a message to Sir Anthony Eden dated November 21, asking him what would be the attitude of the United Kingdom government in the face of such a request, because a somewhat similar request had been made in the House of Commons at Westminster in respect of confidential correspondence with Ceylon and the answer had been that that correspondence could not be published. So I wrote a letter which perhaps I might read into the record together with the answer I received to that communication.

**Mr. Fleming:** Has the Prime Minister consented to the reading of this second letter?

**Mr. St. Laurent (Quebec East):** If the hon. gentleman does not want to hear them I am quite prepared to leave the matter at that.

**Mr. Fleming:** I should like to hear them both.

*The Address—Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent*

**Mr. St. Laurent (Quebec East):** I shall read the two. They are as follows:

Message from the

Right Honourable Louis S. St. Laurent  
to the

Right Honourable Sir Anthony Eden

A leading member of the official opposition has stated publicly that, when our parliament meets in the near future, he proposes to ask for the tabling of one of the communications I addressed to you recently in reply to one of yours.

It is obvious that this correspondence between us could not be published piecemeal and that, if one of these confidential communications were published, they would all have to be published.

A similar question arose in our parliament some eight years ago about similar communications between Mr. Churchill and Mr. Mackenzie King regarding the international situation some seven years before that.

Mr. Attlee's government at that time took the view that such communications should not be published at any time because, as they said: "Such telegrams are framed on the basis that they will not be published and the whole system of full and frank communication between His Majesty's government would be prejudiced if telegrams of this nature had to be prepared on the basis that this rule might not eventually be observed".

I would be glad to know what would be your attitude now and the attitude of the government of the United Kingdom with respect to these confidential communications which have recently passed between us.

I would like to read this message and your reply to it into our record of debates for future reference whenever similar requests for publication of confidential communications may arise.

That was under date of November 21, 1956.  
The answer is as follows:

Message from the

Right Honourable Sir Anthony Eden  
to the

Right Honourable Louis S. St. Laurent

Thank you for your message and for consulting me about the possible publication of the confidential communications which have recently passed between us.

The United Kingdom government's view on such publication remains identical with that expressed by their predecessors on the occasion you mention in your letter. It is, we feel, essential, if there is to be that full intimate and frank exchange of minds between commonwealth governments on which alone policy can be based, that we should all of us be able to proceed on the basis that such correspondence shall be and remain confidential and shall not be published. That is the principle to which we in this country have consistently worked, and, as it happens, it was reiterated so lately as November 15, in answer to a parliamentary question in the House of Commons.

I am sure this is the only possible practice.  
November 23, 1956.

I am sorry, because statements have been made or at least have been reported to have been made, not only in this country but in the United Kingdom, suggesting that I had sent a blistering reply to Sir Anthony Eden. I am not free to disclose that correspondence.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** You are not free to describe it, either, if it is confidential.