

No. 54/8

PRIME MINISTER'S KARACHI PRESS CONFERENCE

Text of statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. St. Laurent, made at Karachi, Pakistan, on February 18, 1954, during the course of his tour of Europe and Asia.

I can assure you that it is a great pleasure to meet you gentlemen of the press of Pakistan, and I would like first of all to express my very deep appreciation of the most cordial and friendly, and perhaps a little bit exaggerated way in which the newspapers have announced my visit to Pakistan. They have certainly not exaggerated when they said it was a great pleasure for me to bring warm greetings from my own country to the people of Pakistan, because we have from the very origin of your State felt that there was very much in common between your people and ours, and that was heightened by the very friendly visit with which your late Prime Minister Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan honoured us in 1950.

We were delighted to receive his visit and we were especially delighted at the tone of his speech to the Members of Parliament on that occasion. From that day I looked forward to the time when it would be possible for me to return his visit and to meet some of the people of Pakistan. I wanted to assure them that we appreciated their importance to us, and the contribution that they would make with the other free peoples to stability of conditions. This is just as important to us as it can be to you people of Pakistan in the realization of the planned developments that you have undertaken with such remarkable success up to the present time.

As you know, we have a very extensive country - but relatively small population for the area of land and water which constitutes our Canadian country. Though we had settled only on a narrow ribbon stretching from one ocean to another just north of the boundary between our country and the United States, that in the vast extent north of that right to the Pole - over which we claim sovereignty, you know - and through which we are establishing our posts and missions and making an effective occupation, we are discovering resources that are being put to use. We think that these resources will contribute to the quantity of things available for the comfort of men and women, not only in our own land but in many other lands as well, because you no doubt know that we consume perhaps hardly two-thirds of what we produce, and have to import fully one-third of what we like to have to use. Our situation is very much dependent upon world conditions and that is why you find us so anxious to assure the people of all other free countries and those with whom we can have cordial relations, of our genuine desire to cooperate with them and to have their cooperation in the kind of friendly and cordial relations that I have felt since I arrived here in Karachi, since I arrived at the airfield 24 hours ago.

I cannot just explain it or express it, but, though I have travelled a good many miles since I left Ottawa two weeks ago, I do not feel very far from Ottawa when I am in your midst. That may be because we have had such cordial and friendly relations with all those people from Pakistan it has been our privilege to meet in Canada, and particularly because of the three years of very friendly, intimate relations we all had with Mr. Mohammad Ali when he was High Commissioner in Canada. Mr. Mohammad Ali, Begum Mohammad Ali and the two boys were just part of the people, the group of people whom we were meeting daily, and we were delighted to find that they had enjoyed their period of life among us, and we all got the impression that we would enjoy contacts with people like that. We were firmly convinced that they were truly representative of the vast majority of the people of Pakistan.

I have been in public office for about twelve years now and nothing has met with so unanimous approval among the people of Canada as the announcement I made after the last General Election that I was going to try to visit before the year was out, the people of the East, these great Asian nations that are now part of the Commonwealth, and which give the Commonwealth another aspect. It is really, we think, a free association of people of several continents without distinction as to race, or colour or creed, all of them anxious to behave as reasonable human beings and to have the kind of relations with other human beings that make life enjoyable, and make it possible for us to devote time and attention and resources to the betterment and better distribution of the good things of life. This is the sort of relations which exist between us and these Commonwealth countries - there are no bonds, no ties - we are co-operating because we like to and because we think it suits our own purpose. We are not bound by anything but our own conceptions of what we think is good human behaviour.

It took us in Canada, you know, quite a long time to arrive at the place where we are now, completely autonomous. We have had the control of our domestic affairs for a long time, but it is only in the last couple of decades that we have really interested ourselves in relations with the other nations of the world. Of course we have been growing, though we are not very large yet. We feel that our situation not only entitles us but makes it our duty to have some concern with world affairs. We find that Commonwealth countries which have very similar institutions, those of the one very similar to the other, and all derived originally from the long practice of parliamentary institutions in the United Kingdom, have much in common. We like that way of organizing our sovereignty, that way of having all our citizens feel that they have a part in the exercise of the national sovereignty.

I have been Prime Minister now for something over five years and, as you know, the Government remains the Government only as long as it has the support of the majority of the members elected to the House of Commons. We have had that support, but we have had that support only because we have been able to do the things that the majority elected to the House of Commons felt were acceptable to the general public. If they were to turn

against us there might be another election and we would have to face the public, and that public would judge whether they were right or we were right. That makes us all very conscious of our continuing responsibility to public opinion, and it seems to me that this is real democracy in action.

Now I know that we have made some slight modifications to adapt these practices of the Mother of Parliaments to the aspirations and needs of our people, and I know that you will make certain modifications that will make those old Parliamentary practices and traditions more workable to meet the requirements of your people, but fundamentally it is the same. Fundamentally we have, as you have, respect for the rule of law, peace, order and good government. That is the opening phrase of the sections of our Constitutional Act distributing the powers between the Parliament of Canada and the legislatures of each of our ten provinces, ten now since 1949.

We started out in 1867 when we were going to have at once just one Canada from one ocean to the other. We have adopted that as our motto: "A mare usque ad mare", but it was only in 1949 that we succeeded in working out terms that brought Newfoundland into the group as the tenth province. We feel now that, though each of our ten provinces wants to have the legislature exercise jurisdiction and control over the things that are of local concern within the province, we are more and more becoming, all of us, proud of the fact that we are Canadians, that the whole of Canada, from one ocean to the other, is our country. We have been making some wonderful oil discoveries in Alberta, but the people down in my Province of Quebec speak of "our oil discoveries" in Alberta. There are discoveries of tremendous quantities of iron ore in North East Quebec and Labrador and Canadians think of those discoveries as Canadian assets.

We are growing closer together as one people in spite of the fact that, you know, we started out with pretty stinging memories of the centuries of enmity that had existed between England and France. We had to realize that we were going to have to live together, and that we could do that more comfortably if we worked together. Now the situation is such that with people of many, many other races who have come to join us and to help us in the work of developing this vast area, there is one citizenship. That is the same for everyone whether he belongs, as I do, to the original French settlers who came three centuries ago to build a New France in the new continent, or whether from those who after the Treaty of Paris became the dominating influence in Canadian affairs, the British people, or whether they are from other nations and races that have come in to help us in the task of Canada's development.

I went through the northern part of Manitoba and Saskatchewan and Alberta a couple of years ago because when I am out in a political campaign I go to the more populous regions, and I had not seen these more remote areas. I travelled by plane to some points but mostly by automobile, stopping in a large number of small settlements, just for a few minutes, to see the people and to be seen by the people. In one little town in Saskatchewan by the name of Marcellin, I stopped. (I have a sister who is a nun and who had been a teacher in several schools in Western Canada for the last 35 years and at one time she was a teacher in Marcellin and I was quite interested in seeing what Marcellin was like.)

There was a little meeting there which was presided over by a Canadian who was just as proud of being a Canadian as I was, although he was a Canadian of Chinese origin.

I have been seeing Icelanders, Mennonites and Ukrainians, and Canadians from other groups, but all Canadians and all proud of the part they and their families were taking in the development of this country of ours. Well, things like that bring home to you the fact that we are all of the same human nature. Some of us think that we are more advanced than we think others are, but we must all remember that the whole thing started here in Asia, and that, though we have made, in part at least by imitating our very powerful neighbours to the South of us, rapid progress in the industrial field, and though because of that we may seem to have processes that can be of use to others, we must not forget that here four or five successive civilizations have been built up, one on top of the other. There is something from the very first in the culture and traditions of these people of the Asian nations, and they have many times enriched the patrimony of mankind, and they are going to do it again. These new organizations are going to continue to make great contributions to the patrimony of mankind.

We say quite frequently what we call the "Lord's Prayer", "Our Father Who Art in Heaven". It is the same common Father of mankind, and we are happy to feel that there are many millions in your country, and many millions in other countries who are disposed to regard us as brothers working towards the same general goal of peace and welfare for ourselves, for our families, and for those of our families who will be the succeeding generations.

I told you that I was rather diffident to meet you gentlemen today. I haven't really got anything to announce, you know, beyond saying that we think that we are on the whole pretty good people, and we think that you are on the whole pretty good people, and we think that good people should be able to get along together. We know from terrible experience that nobody wins a war, and we know that it would be even truer now than at any time in the past. Nations, all nations, now have in their possession those weapons of vast destruction which would wreak havoc, perhaps almost extirpation of our civilizations if we were to be foolish enough again to set out upon the purpose of destroying each other. I have said a good many times that I have been fortunate enough to enjoy good health, and that I am looking forward to quite a few more years to live, but that I do not expect to see another world war. I sincerely hope that this legitimate fear we must have of what we could do to each other is going to prevent any of us from attempting to do it. We must all realize that we would all suffer terribly and that we would set back the progress of mankind for a long period. That is what required us to resort to this North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

I was at San Francisco when the United Nations Charter was set up. It provided, as you know, for the Security Council. I then attended some of the meetings of the United Nations, and it was not very long before I did not feel very secure with this Security Council which could make no decision that was not subject to the veto of any one of the five Great Powers. That was why as early as 1947 I said in a short speech I made there that

there were some of us who felt insecure and who would be willing to do more for greater security, and that if things continued as they seemed we would have to see if that was not the wise thing for us to do. That was the origin. I am not boasting of having invented it but we were all feeling that way, and because we were feeling that way pretty soon we got together and tried to build up the kind of strength that would make any possible aggressor feel that it was not going to be profitable to wage war. Our Organization is not designed for any other purpose than to try to prevent that there should be another war.

Of course to do that we have to follow the old maxim, if you want peace, you have to prepare for war. So we are building up strength, hoping that it will never be used, hoping that it will be sufficient to make any potential aggressor feel that aggression would not be profitable. We are still in the cold war. We have had the very unfortunate Korean war, but there I think the United Nations did demonstrate that they could act together, not for any purpose of conquest, but merely for the purpose of demonstrating that aggression would not succeed, and I do not think it has succeeded. I think that that demonstration has been very costly. In human lives and human suffering the people of South Korea have suffered evidently more than those of us who have contributed forces to help them prevent aggression from being successful, but I think it has been a demonstration of the possibility of people working together to try and keep a stable situation in the world.

I have had conversations in the last two weeks with Sir Winston Churchill and some of his colleagues, with the President and Prime Minister of France and some of their colleagues, the President of the German Republic and Dr. Adenauer, the Chancellor, and some of his colleagues, with the new Prime Minister of Italy and his colleagues, and now with your Governor-General and with your Prime Minister. I find we are all hoping for the same objective of peace for our people and peace for all peoples and for genuine helpful cooperation between the peoples.

I can assure you that, though I am not going to be very long here and I will not have time to see but a very small part of your great country, it will help me much because I will continue to read about it, and what I will have seen will help me to better understand what I have read and will continue to read. It will make me all the more grateful for the kind tone that has been used by the papers of Karachi commenting upon my visit to your country.

I don't know whether there are any of you gentlemen who have any questions on which you might feel that I could be of any assistance. I don't promise you that I can, you know. I went through an election campaign last summer, and the only promise I made was that I was going to try to do my best. So if you ask me any questions the only promise I will make is that I will do my best.

(A few parts of what follows were not distinctly audible to the stenographers).

Question: What is the point of view of your country on a recession in the United States?

Of course there are some sectors of our economy that are slack at this time. We have textiles, and in the

textile industry it seems to us that there has been over-production in our country and over-production in other countries as well. Our industry for the manufacture of agricultural machinery is rather slack. That depends principally upon the fact that we have not been able to export as much as we had before. Our own purchases have also fallen off by about 10 per cent. They are making the kind of instruments now that don't wear out in one year, you know, and when a man has bought one he doesn't buy a replacement as long as that one is any good. After the war there was a great demand for agricultural machinery, and fortunately in our country we had good crops, we found good markets, we exported at good prices, and our agricultural producers had good incomes and they bought a lot of farm machinery. But they are going to take care of it and they are not going to replace it until it has to be replaced, and that has brought about some slackening in that section of our economy. Our forecast for 1954 is not below our realizations for 1953, and we have information that the capital investment is going to continue at the same very high rate as prevailed in our country for the past five or six years.

Question: Do you think trade with the Communist countries will help the position?

I don't know. We still have some trade with the totalitarian countries but not very extensive, and of course we are not one of the big countries. We follow along. We do not make world conditions but we try to take advantage of them, not unfair advantage; we think we give value for value received. We do not make the conditions of world trade. We have been doing our best for years to promote multilateral trade because you cannot have an exact balance between two countries. Some countries buy more from us than we buy from them. Other countries from which we buy more, buy less from us. We have been struggling as best we could to bring about a situation where it was only the over-all balance that mattered and you did not have to sell to exactly the same people you bought from.

Question: Would you say the Commonwealth had failed because there were disagreements between its members?

As I conceive the Commonwealth, you know, it has no authority over its members. What it can do is exercise good offices and give good advice. We in Canada would rather resent it if other countries of the Commonwealth attempted to tell us how we should behave, even towards another Commonwealth country. We think that the real stability of the Commonwealth is founded upon the impression of each one of us that we remain masters of our own affairs and that no one is going to feel entitled to dictate to us. I personally have never been very much impressed with the suggestion that there might be some kind of a Commonwealth court. That has not seemed to me to be something that would really strengthen the Commonwealth as such.

Question: If there are Canadians of Chinese origin, have you any Communist problems in Canada?

We have a group that calls itself the Labour Progressive Party, or under another name it is the Peace Congress. It is not very numerous and we have not been very much concerned. There was at one time a member of that group who became a Member of Parliament, but when we had our spy investigation it was found that his conduct was such that he was prosecuted, convicted and as a consequence lost his seat in Parliament. We have had two elections since then and not one has been returned. Our people, the vast majority of them, feel that there are some who are real agitators for the Kremlin, but that there are others who are good, honest people, who are impressed by the propaganda that is put out for "peace". We fear that kind of peace would not be the kind of peace that our people are looking for.

Question: If the Commonwealth is not a group of nations that can exercise control over its members how do you hope to secure world peace?

We have been saying that the purpose for which the North Atlantic Organization was being built up was to tell them that if there was aggression against any of us we would all fight, and some of us feel that if that had been evident before the first world war, well perhaps the Kaiser would have hesitated; and perhaps if it had been evident before the second world war, perhaps Mr. Hitler and Mr. Mussolini would not have contemplated war with equanimity. They certainly did not start it to have it finish the way it did finish. Now we are saying, these fourteen nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, that we are pledged to each other. If there is aggression against any one of us we will all stand together to fight the aggressor.

Question: Do you share the views of the Pakistan leaders when they say that they think no nation has the right to dictate to Pakistan in the acceptance of United States aid?

I think that Pakistan like Canada is a sovereign state, and that Pakistan like Canada, if it has any serious problem, would welcome any assistance that might be offered for the settlement of the problem, but I would not expect Pakistan, any more than Canada, to want anyone to say that you must do this or that.

Question: Do you share the sentiment expressed by Pandit Nehru about U.S. military aid?

I would not want to be specific. I live on the other side of the world, and I have not the background that your statesmen have here about Asian problems, and quite frankly I do not know just exactly what Pandit Nehru did say. I do know that we are alongside the United States, that they have ten times our population and that they have a national income 17 or 18 times what we have. We would not want them to say to us, do this or do that, and they don't attempt to do so. We are fortunate in the attitude that is maintained towards us by this great nation alongside of which we are living. We do many things in common. We have to provide in common at the present time for defences against air warfare against North America, and we have to

have establishments of joint interest to the Americans and to ourselves in our territory. But all that is done by arrangement whereby it is recognized that in our territory we are sovereign; in their territory they are sovereign.

Question: Inaudible

It frequently happens that people have diverging views and that an outsider can be a little bit more objective but not by imposing anything but merely by suggesting what would appear to him as a reasonable course to follow. I know from the quarrels that we have had at home that sometimes we consider that our English-speaking fellow-Canadians were not being very objective about us and I have no doubt that they feel that we were not being very objective about them. We were able to finally get on to common ground and arrange matters. Perhaps if we had been separate nations the Province of Quebec on one side and the other English-speaking parts of Canada on the other side, there might have been occasions when we would have come to real active conflict. But that was not the condition in which we lived. We are all in one country and have to live together, and so we decided to work together.

Question: Are you going to mediate between Pakistan and India over Kashmir?

Oh no. Some newspaper said that I was going to try to poke my nose into other people's business. That is not the purpose of my visit. I want to leave better relations between Canada and the countries I visit after my visit than I found before I attempted the visit, and I am old enough to know that the way to do that would not be by attempting to tell the statesmen of other countries that I knew more about the way to conduct their affairs than they do.

Question: Do you think the Commonwealth should present a solution of the colour problem in South Africa?

I have never been in South Africa. It is a very anxious problem down there. There has been and there still is in many parts of the world discrimination on lines of colour, lines of race, lines of religion. We are all trying to overcome it. We are all trying to realize that that is intolerable. I do not know enough about the situation there. I am very happy that we have not a situation in Canada similar to the situation which appears to exist in South Africa.

Question: Could your visit to India and Pakistan contribute to peace between the two?

I would hope that the relations between India and Pakistan would before very long be the kind of relations that exist between the United States and Canada. A century ago, you know, we were very much afraid of them and that was why, that was the spur which urged us on to unite and to try to work together. During my life-time the relations have been very much improved, though we still feel that they have pretty high tariffs and that we would be very much better off if their tariffs weren't so high. We think that ultimately they might be better off too, but of course they are the masters of their tariffs

and all we can do is discuss with them, and we think that we have made some progress in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade which has been signed, and we hope better progress can be made. I know from my own conversations with President Eisenhower that he feels it would be easier and better for the economies of the nations that want to live and work together if there were fewer restrictions to trade, but those have to be gradually removed without bringing about chaotic conditions. No one wants to be responsible for unemployment in his own country and these things have to be dealt with cautiously. I would not be so presumptuous as to hope that my visit to the Prime Minister of Pakistan and Prime Minister Nehru of India would have any results on the relations between India and Pakistan. I think that the two Prime Ministers are very much more competent to bring about better relations than anything a Canadian, no matter how presumptuous he was, might hope to accomplish.

We have had some of the same problems as are now existing between India and Pakistan; for instance international waters. There are lots of streams which criss-cross that line between United States and Canada, and we have had since 1912 the International Joint Commission so that when there is a dispute of any kind about the waters, the matter is referred to the International Joint Commission which has not power to make decisions at all, but has only the right to investigate and recommend. But the results have been totally satisfactory. Here we have been discussing the joint problems of the hydro-electric power of the St. Lawrence River for a great many years and it looks now as if we were nearing a solution.

Question: Did the United States forcibly occupy any part of your territory?

They tried it in 1812 you know, and we were fearful that they might try it again when we were discussing Confederation. We feel that through international arbitration they have now got territory that should have belonged to us.

Question: Goodwill between Pakistan and Canada. Could you suggest what form it should take?

I think it should be both cultural and economic.

Question: Not military?

I hope that with that kind of atmosphere military action would be secondary in importance.

Question: Should NATO membership be extended to other countries who wanted to join?

We have committed ourselves to the members of the North Atlantic Organization just about to the limit of what the Government in Canada can undertake and expect to remain the Government.

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