

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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An Address by the Prime Minister of Canada
to Members of the Parliament of India,
February 23, 1954

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Council of States,

Members of the House of the People:

I am grateful to the Speaker of the House of the People for his warm welcome. His words reflect the friendliness which has surrounded me since my arrival in India two days ago. By this I have been deeply touched.

For many years I have wanted to visit India. I wished to repay the visit with which your Prime Minister honoured us in 1949. Moreover, I wanted to see for myself something of your great country, and to demonstrate by my coming here how conscious we are in Canada of its importance in world affairs. I have also come to convey the warm and friendly feelings of the people of Canada toward the people of India. I appreciate the privilege you are extending to me in allowing me to make my first public address in India to you, the elected members of the national Parliament of more free men and free women than any other Parliament in the world. I bring you good wishes from the members of the Canadian Parliament, which was in session when I left Ottawa. Through you I send warm greetings to the three hundred and sixty-five million people of India from the fifteen million people of Canada.

Few events of recent years have so caught the imagination of Canadians as the emergence of India and other countries of South and Southeast Asia as free nations with democratic parliamentary institutions much like our own. We had watched with special interest your struggle for independence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, whose inspiration has spread far beyond the bounds of this country and indeed of Asia. And we were glad that the struggle ended, to use Mr. Nehru's words, "graciously, gracefully and with a minimum of bitterness." As such it marked not the end of India's relations with the United Kingdom but the beginning of a new understanding based on equality, friendship and mutual high regard.

In the years which have followed we have watched your successive achievements in welding India into a single political entity, in framing and adopting a national constitution; and in conducting a general election on a scale which amazed those of us who have had some experience with elections in our own countries. Finally, we have followed with admiration your efforts to improve the economic conditions of your people

through your Five-Year Plan. We have been happy, through the Colombo Plan, to assist in this splendid endeavour, on the success of which depends the well-being of millions of your people.

I want you to know, too, that Canadians are grateful to India for the conscientious, active part she has been playing in international affairs. We Canadians are glad that Mr. Nehru and other Indian leaders have found it possible to spare time from their pressing preoccupations at home to help in the solution of world problems, and that India has assigned so many able public servants to work in the international field.

For us one of the most pleasant and rewarding results of your participation in world affairs is the opportunity it gives us to meet frequently with Indian representatives with whom we are associated in the United Nations, in other international organizations and in the Commonwealth. In these days, when the destinies of people all over the world are so closely bound together, the value of such meetings can hardly be over-estimated.

Personally, I have particularly welcomed the opportunities which conferences of Commonwealth Prime Ministers have given to me to meet and talk with your Prime Minister. While this is the first time I have met him in India, several other Canadian Ministers, including three members of the present government, have visited your country. Mr. Sinclair, who attended the meeting of the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee this last fall, travelled extensively in India and brought back a report on his tour which makes me wish I could stay with you as long as he did.

Next September we will have the pleasure of receiving the Consultative Committee in Ottawa. Your delegates will follow in the footsteps of many other distinguished Indians who have come to Canada during the past few years. Last year we were honoured by visits from your Vice-President, Dr. Radhakrishnan, as well as from Mrs. Pandit and Mr. Krishna Menon. Also from time to time I receive welcome visits from Indian officials and students who come to Canada under the Colombo Plan or under the Technical Assistance programme of the United Nations.

Perhaps our most intimate association with you is within the Commonwealth. Like you, we enjoy the friendship of many peoples outside it, and certainly our main objective is to expand this sphere of international co-operation as much as possible. Although there may be those who hold a different view, I am of the opinion that the Commonwealth contributes to this broader objective. And it does this without in any way limiting the freedom of action of any of its members. It has no central organization and we all retain full control of our foreign policies as well as our domestic policies.

There is a certain easy, constructive relationship within the Commonwealth, the quality of which is difficult to define. It is something more than the fact that each member cherishes in accordance with its own heritage, freedom under the rule of law. The special quality of our Commonwealth relationship seems to me to be derived from intangible ties of friendship, mutual respect and confidence. The bond which exists between Canada and India provides, I think, a particularly happy illustration of relations within the Commonwealth.

Indian and Canadian views of the Commonwealth have many similarities. For many years Canada played a leading part in the development of the sort of Commonwealth into which the new India was able to fit without the slightest infringement of its independence. My predecessor, the late Mr. Mackenzie King, had a great deal to do with this development. He also exerted a helpful influence in the 1948 discussions which prepared the way for India, when it decided to become a republic, to choose also to remain within the Commonwealth. I personally warmly welcomed India's desire to remain associated with us, and I remember that, as Secretary of State for External Affairs, I had an opportunity of expressing this view to your Prime Minister in the correspondence which we exchanged at that time.

In that historic 1947-48 period we saw in the desire of the peoples of India, Pakistan and Ceylon to retain their association with us in the Commonwealth, the signs of a new and promising era both in Commonwealth relations and in the relations between Asia and the West, and we welcomed them without hesitation or reservation.

The Commonwealth is an association of people of many races and colours and creeds, working together on a basis of mutual respect and complete equality of status and the world today needs the wisdom of many peoples. The Commonwealth does perform, I think, a very useful service in enabling its Western members to keep closely in touch with three great Asian nations. This can do a great deal to help the West to understand the views and aspirations of the East. In turn, we are able to explain our point of view to you.

Commonwealth countries have formed the habit of explaining their points of view to one another quietly and frankly. They are accustomed to listening carefully and thoughtfully to what the others have to say, and of getting a great many important things done in an informal but effective manner. These are qualities out of which true international co-operation can grow and which applied to world affairs by all nations will assist the United Nations to carry out the tasks and achieve the purposes which the founders of the organization had in mind.

In speaking to you this afternoon, I may perhaps be expected to say something about the Canadian point of view on certain questions which are of importance to both our countries. I will venture to do so, but since this is not the occasion for a close examination of particular issues, I shall speak in very general terms.

I think we shall discover that, although the Canadian approach to certain questions is somewhat different from yours, we are good companions in the broad endeavour to find realistic solutions to world problems.

Out of this troubled period has been born a new concept of international co-operation -- the concept that countries which are more highly developed materially should co-operate with those which, while the history of their civilization and culture reaches back into a far more distant past are less advanced in their techniques for improving the economic conditions of their people. Canada was among the first to subscribe to this concept, and it has become one of the basic guiding principles of Canadian policy.

The Canadian people have enthusiastically endorsed this policy. Something of the "sense of high adventure" in the words of Mr. Nehru which has marked your endeavours in India has challenged their imagination and enlisted their support. We too you know have a like "sense of high adventure" about what is taking place in the way of new developments and rapid industrial expansion in our own country in these years.

Both our countries are deeply aware that the continued progress of our national development programmes depends on the maintenance of world peace. It is on the question of the policies most apt to promote international security that a difference in our attitudes is more noticeable. Let me say at the outset that we fully understand the historical and other factors which underlie your policy but we believe that for our part of this divided world there is merit in the course we are following in our country. We are all in great need, these days, of sincere negotiation and wise political decisions. If India, in playing her part in the search for such decisions, considers it best to refrain from commitments which others find advisable, we certainly do not question this. The world already has reason to be grateful to India for her achievements in the field of international conciliation and for this we honour you. But let me now try to explain to you our policy and the reasons for it.

When the United Nations was founded in 1945 the world looked forward to a period in which all nations would so respect the rights of others that disarmament would prove feasible. These hopes were not fulfilled. On the contrary, the shadow of totalitarianism was again cast over Europe. It was by no means clear that the United Nations, invaluable though it was proving as a forum for the discussion of international problems and as an agency for furthering economic and social progress, was capable of providing the collective security envisaged in the Charter. With the memory of two disastrous wars fresh in our minds we in Canada together with like-minded peoples in North America and Europe entered into a limited collective defence arrangement in accord with the provisions of the Charter. We did so in the belief that without such a defence arrangement peace might be imperilled.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is also intended to promote economic and cultural co-operation, which, of course, ultimately would benefit others in addition to its own members. We hope to build, on the foundations of the cultures which the peoples of Europe and North America have inherited, a community which, through co-operation and constructive effort, will impart its own creative vitality to our part of the modern world. Our main immediate purpose, however, is to deter any possible aggression and to maintain that collective strength without which we could not confidently play our part in the search for negotiated settlements and for a tolerable basis on which our countries and the countries which have Communist regimes may live side by side in peace.

The United States, much the most powerful nation in this collective arrangement, is its leader. As we see it, in the light of all the circumstances of the post-war period, the readiness of the United States to assume the responsibilities of a major power has been of very great benefit to the free world. We who live alongside of their great and dynamic nation know from our own long experience that the United States

is the most unselfish country ever to play this role and that it has no other ambition than to live and let others live in mutually helpful international intercourse.

Whatever those of us who do not bear the arduous responsibility of this role may think from time to time of particular proposals, we Canadians are thankful that, both through experience and by instinct, the United States and its people are devoted to peace and freedom for themselves and for all others. As their close neighbours, we have special reason to know and appreciate the qualities of the American people, which have been reflected in the fundamental outlook of their Government over the years. Through the sound and fury of contemporary clamour and behind the blurred picture presented by films and popular magazines, we in Canada see millions of good people who are working hard and unselfishly to build a good and free society in a world of peace. These people differ little in their essential qualities from the great majority of people in your country or in mine, or, for that matter, in any country in the world.

Now I should like also to remind you that our collective defensive arrangement is a co-operative association of sovereign nations. As the United States Secretary of State said at the General Assembly of the United Nations last year, military force which is distributed throughout several countries cannot be used effectively unless all of the countries concerned are in agreement. He added, and his words, I assure you, apply to my country, "Such agreement would be totally unobtainable except for operations responsive to the clear menace of aggression." Those words reveal the essential nature of our collective arrangement with respect to the problem of security. Even if anyone were tempted to believe the false charges sometimes levelled at the United States, does anyone really believe that the United States could bring about aggressive or provocative collective action by the countries associated with it?

I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that the Government and people of Canada are every bit as anxious as your Government and people to ease international tension. Indeed, as has been amply proved by our actions during the past few years, we are continually bending our efforts in this direction; and many of these efforts have been in close harmony with yours. We have welcomed recent indications that an easing of international tension may be possible. This not only would bring the world closer to a condition of security; it would also enable all of us to devote a much larger share of our budgets to peaceful purposes and make larger amounts available for economic development in our countries.

If I may diverge for a moment to what are commonly known as colonial issues, as they are presented at the United Nations, I would like to make clear two points about the Canadian attitude. We welcome the advance of all dependent peoples toward self-government. At the same time, partly because our own evolution toward complete independence was no less successful for being gradual, we see a certain merit in proceeding in these matters at a pace which allows a firm foundation for self-government to be established.

It is with diffidence that I venture now to say a few words about the Canadian attitude toward Asian problems. Since it is only in recent years that the surge of events has caused us to become actively concerned with developments in

this part of the world, we Canadians have much to learn about Asian affairs. It is now clear that not only the welfare of the people of Asia, in which we are deeply interested, but also the welfare of the whole world may depend to a very considerable extent on what happens in Asia. We, therefore, watch events here closely. And I hope the views we have expressed from time to time and the actions we have taken have been of assistance to those who are labouring to bring peace and stability to this part of the world.

I also believe that we have demonstrated to the people of Asia that we want to be their friends. Our Colombo Plan assistance, which has so far gone largely to India, Pakistan and Ceylon, is beginning to flow to other parts of South and Southeast Asia. We have twice -- in the Second World War and recently in Korea -- joined in helping to repel aggression in Asia. And, sympathizing with the aspirations of Asian peoples, we have exerted our influence, and are continuing to exert it, in the direction which, so far as is humanly possible, will give Asian countries that voice in the settlement of Asian problems and that control over their own destinies which is theirs by right.

Canada's growing interest in Asia and Asian problems reflects the contraction of the modern world and the fundamental changes which have taken place in recent years in Asia's relations with the West. To the extent that we have come to realize that the welfare of all parts of the world is interdependent a new concept of world-wide partnership has evolved. You in Asia are inevitably concerned with what happens in Europe or North America just as we are concerned with what happens here.

We Canadians have a deep distaste for the disruptive tactics which those with totalitarian ambitions often employ, and we abhor aggression from whatever quarter it may arise. We know how disturbing such forces must be to those who like ourselves require an untroubled period in which to build for the future.

In thinking about Asia, however, we try to retain a sense of perspective. We perceive that most nationalist movements in modern times are essentially a reaction against feudalism or foreign rule; and we understand the desire of Asian leaders to concentrate on developing a way of life which will answer their peoples' needs in new conditions of national and individual freedom. We realize that many Asian countries, though old in the arts of civilization, are young as independent states of the twentieth century model, and are faced with staggering problems as they strive to build stable societies for hundreds of millions of people, many of whom have been all too familiar with distress and want.

While we do not presume to prescribe a political or economic philosophy for Asians we are particularly attracted by the Indian approach which seeks material progress through the free effort of the people. The wisdom of this approach was emphasized in a statement which your Prime Minister made just over a year ago when he said, "We have decided to build India according to democratic methods because, ultimately, we feel that democracy has something of the highest human value." We applaud India's vision and courage in making this splendid effort, and we watch with sympathy the fine efforts of many other Asian governments to work out satisfactory solutions to their problems. When

we think of Asia we have a great hope that the new nations which have lately emerged out of the ancient civilizations of the east will again flourish and enrich the world.

When our mind turns to Asia we find pleasure in reflecting on the closeness with which Canadians have been associated with Indians in the efforts of the United Nations to end the Korean war and to make progress toward a Korean settlement. I would like to pay tribute to the late Sir Benegal Narsing Rau, to Mrs. Pandit and to Mr. Krishna Menon, all of whom, over a long period, have distinguished themselves by their work for the United Nations and in the cause of peace in Korea. Yesterday saw the completion of India's work in Korea on the Repatriation Commission. It is fitting that today I should acknowledge the splendid service which General Thimayya and the Indian Custodian Force have rendered in Korea. We are all indebted to India for having undertaken and carried to completion this difficult and thankless task.

While we Canadians have not always seen eye-to-eye with all of India's proposals on Korean questions, we have worked closely and confidently with Indians for several years on this very difficult problem. It has been, and still is, our hope that India, which can bring much wisdom and experience to bear on it, will participate as fully as possible in future efforts to bring it nearer to solution.

I believe that, in spite of the very different points of view with which various countries have approached the Korean problem, the active participation of India and other members of the United Nations in the day-to-day practical efforts which have been made to facilitate a settlement, has been of great benefit in establishing a working relationship which will be valuable to us all in the future.

I would like to reiterate the Canadian view that the United Nations objective in Korea is to defeat aggression and not, as has been occasionally suggested, to impose unity on that country by force, or to spearhead a crusade in Asia against Communism or any other "ism". This military objective is a very different thing from the underlying political objective of bringing about the unification of Korea by peaceful democratic means.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I have touched on the Canadian point of view on certain international questions because I felt you would want me to speak frankly to you about our outlook and the reasons for our policy. I am confident you will agree with me that considering that we are on opposite sides of the globe and have different histories, traditions, and ways of life, the similarity of our outlook is striking. It is hardly surprising that countries like yours and mine, which are not satisfied to adopt a passive attitude toward international issues, should sometimes strike out in directions which are not precisely parallel. But our respective paths are toward the same goal, and I trust we will always work toward that common goal with respect for and trust in each other.

When Mr. Nehru addressed the Canadian Parliament in 1949 he said: "Canada, with her traditions of democracy, her sense of justice and her love of fair play, should understand our purpose and our motives." I can assure you that we in Canada do endeavour to so understand India and we know that you in India try to understand us.

In his address to the Canadian Parliament, Mr. Nehru also said: "The differences that have existed in our minds about east and west have little substance today, and we are all partners in the same great undertaking. I have little doubt that, in spite of the dangers that beset the world today, the forces of constructive and co-operative effort for human betterment will succeed, and the spirit of man will triumph again."

When we heard those words, nearly five years ago, we agreed with them wholeheartedly and it is because I agree with them as wholeheartedly today that I make bold to repeat them here and I do so in the confident belief that our mutual readiness to understand each other's points of view and our trust in each other's good faith do serve and will continue to serve that genuine community of interest and of purpose which we derive from the common aspirations of our people.

On my own behalf and on behalf of my fellow members of the Canadian Parliament, I thank you sincerely for the privilege you have accorded me of addressing you on this occasion.

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