

## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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### INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Address by Mr. Escott Reid, High Commissioner  
for Canada in India, at the final plenary session  
of the United Nations Association's Conference on  
Canadian Aid to Under-Developed Countries, Ottawa,  
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I am very glad to have this opportunity within a week of my return to Canada on home leave to speak to this conference. It gives me a chance to say to this representative group of Canadian citizens: first, how happy I am after two and a half years' absence to be home again in Ottawa; secondly, how proud I have been to be the representative of Canada in India; and, thirdly, how grateful I am to the government and people of India for the warm welcome they have given my family and myself and the innumerable courtesies and kindnesses they have shown us.

I should like to develop each of these three points but I won't. If I did there wouldn't be time for me to say anything about Canadian aid to under-developed countries.

I come from the most important under-developed democratic country in the world - India. It lies alongside the most important under-developed communist country in the world - China. One is a country of almost 400 million people. The other is a country of about 600 million. Here is being played before our eyes one of the greatest dramas in the history of the world. The protagonists are the two most populous nations the world has ever known. They are the two nations of the world which possess the most ancient continuous cultures the world has ever known. They are both potentially great powers. Each is conducting warfare in its own territory against the ancient enemies of mankind - poverty, disease, and ignorance. One protagonist in the drama has embraced communism and totalitarian rule. The other protagonist is determined to achieve its economic and social revolution by democratic methods.

The drama is exciting for us because the future of our own Western World will be profoundly affected by its outcome.

If you should go to India and travel up and down the country as I have done, you will, I think, find the drama of India's development deeply moving not merely because of this but also because on the outcome of the drama depends the happiness of people you have seen and met and talked to. The villagers who have welcomed you into their mud houses. The refugees from East Pakistan who have built a new spick-and-span settlement for themselves on the outskirts of Calcutta. The workmen in the factory for making glass bangles who get so much pleasure out of making some especially intricate glass novelties for you. The friends of your children and the children of your friends.

You will think of the many individual Indians you have met who are building the new India of their dreams with their sweat and tears.

I think, for example, of a young Muslim civil servant who is the devoted, overworked director of a great community project who travelled with us for five days showing us his project. I think of two senior officials of the city of Calcutta who spent one morning showing me the Calcutta slums - the worst slums in the world - and who said goodbye to me with tears in their eyes because of the interest I had taken in what they were trying to do to remove this blot on civilization. I think of a saintly Hindu scientist who is devoting his talents to agricultural research because of a saying of his spiritual leader, the great Hindu saint Vivekananda "You can't teach religion to people with empty stomachs". Since he wants his countrymen to be more religious, he is trying to find ways to fill their stomachs. I think of an old farmer in the Punjab who showed me proudly the twenty acres which he and his sons had cleared and brought under cultivation.

You will, if you travel in India, find the drama of India's development deeply moving not only because of the respect, admiration and affection which you will develop for the people of India and your love for the beauty of India's mountains and plains, its old buildings and its holy shrines, but also because of that which lies behind and beyond these things - the culture of India.

It is an ancient and a rich culture, a culture with a tolerant and a humane tradition. It has contributed to the world great saints and philosophers, great poets and dramatists, and artists and architects, two of the world's greatest emperors, two of the world's great religions. It is a culture which continues to produce great men. I think that if a group of wise men were to try to draw up a list of, say, the twenty-five greatest men of the last hundred years, they would find that there were strong arguments for including at least five Indians: the two Hindu religious leaders, Ramakrishna and his disciple Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru.

The culture of the whole world would be impoverished if India, the vessel of an ancient, lovely and living culture, were to dissolve into anarchy, or if to save itself from anarchy it were to adopt totalitarian rule and thus be false to its traditions of tolerance and humanity.

On the other hand the culture of the whole world will be enriched if India succeeds in its programme of economic and social development. For success in that programme will release tremendous latent energies in India and those energies will produce not only things of the hand but things of the mind and the spirit.

Today the mind and the spirit of India are caged, cribbed, confined by grinding poverty - poverty deeper and more pervasive than can be imagined by anyone who has not seen it with his own eyes.

If a Canadian comes to Delhi who seriously wants to try to learn something about India, there is one piece of advice I always give. It is, "Get out of the cities and towns and see at least one average Indian village. Don't just drive through it. If you can drive through it, it is on a motorable road and it is not therefore an average village since few Indian villages are on motorable roads. Leave your car on the highway. Walk to a village which lies at least half a mile along a lane from the highway. Spend at least an hour or an hour and a half walking slowly up and down the narrow dusty lanes of that village and get the villagers to give you permission to go into their houses".

I give this advice because over 80 per cent of the people of India live in its half million villages and no one can hope to understand India if he doesn't learn something about villages. The heart of India lies in its villages, said Mahatma Gandhi.

I give the advice to see Indian villages because I have found from experience that it is only if one sees a representative Indian village with one's own eyes that one begins to comprehend the poverty of India, and the key to understanding India is its poverty- immense, pervasive, overwhelming.

I have taken expert Canadian economists to see their first Indian village, economists who had read deeply about India's poverty. They knew the number of calories of food the average Indian consumes a day, the number of yards of cloth he can afford to buy a year, the number of years he is likely to live. But I have found no one, no matter how much he has read about India's poverty, who is not profoundly shocked by the poverty of the first Indian village he sees. It is so much worse than he expected.

Poverty together with the disease and the illiteracy which accompany it are the enemies within the gates which India is fighting in its programmes of economic and social development.

The depth of the poverty is one measure of the task before India. Another measure is the number of people or things concerned in any given problem. In India it so often seems to be 40 million or 50 million.

Thus one of the major economic problems of India is that its population will go up by about 50 million in the next ten years. A major social problem is untouchability and there are in India about 50 million harijans - Gandhi's name for the former untouchables. One of the great destroyers of crops in India is the monkey and there are 50 million of them. Of the 220 million cattle in India, it is estimated that 40 million are useless and should be destroyed. The breed of the other cattle should be improved but how many artificial insemination centres would be required to deal with 180 million cattle and with 50 million water buffaloes, 50 million sheep and 60 million goats.

The task before India is so stupendous that to make a sizeable impact on it will require the devoted labours of a whole generation of Indians. It is no wonder that Mr. Nehru has said that this generation of Indians has voluntarily condemned itself to a lifetime of hard labour.

The first battles in the first campaign in independent India's war against poverty, disease and ignorance have on the whole been successful. Statistics in India are subject to a wide margin of error but it is generally agreed that in the last four years agricultural production in India has gone up by nearly twenty per cent and industrial production by some thirty per cent; while population has gone up by less than six per cent. Most of the increase in agricultural production is the result of good monsoons but some of the increase results from improvements in methods of production.

An increase of nearly twenty per cent in agricultural production and an increase of some thirty per cent in industrial production are impressive but they are not as impressive as the evidences of an expanding economy which you can see with your own eyes as you travel in India. These are some of the things which I have seen in the past two and a half years.

I have twice visited the great locomotive works at Chittaranjan in West Bengal which went into production in 1950. Around the locomotive works has been built a company town which would be a credit to the Aluminum Company of Canada - and that is high praise as anyone who has been to Arvida knows.

I have seen the fertilizer works at Sindri which were constructed three years ago. The month I visited Sindri it had reached its target of 1,000 tons of ammonium sulphate a day. This fertilizer is not piling up in warehouses. It is being used by the farmers of India to increase agricultural production. Perhaps the best index of the pace of agricultural reform in India is the use of fertilizers. It is going up so rapidly that India is planning to build three fertilizer plants of the same size as Sindri during the second five-year plan which starts next year.

I have paid two visits to the Mayurakshi multi-purpose project in the hills on the borders of West Bengal and Bihar where twenty million dollars of Canadian Colombo Plan aid has gone. The first time I went I saw thousands of Santal villagers, men and women, moving in single file up and down ramps carrying material to the dams and rubble out. It was my first sight of the Indian method of construction which Le Corbusier has described as using men like innumerable ants.

I thought then of the miracle of Colombo Plan aid. We gave the Indian Government fifteen million dollars worth of wheat. The Indian Government sold the wheat to Indian consumers. With the rupees it got for the wheat it paid Santal villagers and masonry workers from Madras and engineers from Calcutta to build the Mayurakshi dam. When the dam is finished it will irrigate 600,000 acres of land and increase the rice crops on this land by hundreds of thousands of tons a year. This is the magical process by which Canadian wheat is turned into Indian rice. The increased yield of foodstuffs as a result of irrigation from Mayurakshi will be so great that each grain of wheat we gave India will every two or three years produce a grain of rice.

I cannot describe all the evidences I have seen of development in India: the projects of the Demodar Valley Corporation; the research institutes where new high yielding strains of jute and cotton and wheat and corn are being developed; the new engineering schools called technological institutes where students are given a practical as well as a theoretical training; the fisheries projects.

Most important of all, I have seen signs in some of the community projects I've visited - and I must have visited about eight - that the first positions are being carried in a frontal attack on inefficient agricultural methods. This is the most important thing which is happening in India. If India is to double its agricultural production in the next twenty-five years, as it must, it has to introduce dynamic elements into what has been a static village economy. It has to arouse the villager from the lethargy of centuries and release his immense latent energies.

This task can, I am sure, be accomplished. The reason it can be accomplished is that the Indian villager though poor and stubborn and illiterate is shrewd and intelligent and possesses dignity and independence. He is poverty stricken but he is no slum dweller ashamed of living in a slum. He is proud to show to a stranger the house and the village where his ancestors have lived for countless centuries. The peasant of India is not the residue left in an old agricultural community when most of those with enterprise have migrated to the cities or abroad. The peasant is the yeoman of India. He is the backbone of the country. The job of improving conditions in the villages is not therefore a social welfare job. It is an advertising job. The peasant must be sold the idea of using better seed, new methods of cultivation, improved implements.

The peasant is a tough customer. He's from Missouri; he has to be shown. He has the wise caution of a man who lives so close to the edge of starvation that he can't afford to take risks on a new seed or a new method of cultivation. He won't believe what is written in pamphlets or what an agricultural expert tells him. But it is a different thing if he sees with his own eyes on the field of a neighbour that a new seed or a new method of cultivation will produce bigger crops.

The Indian experts on the subject are the first to admit that not all community projects are successful and that no community project is successful in everything it has tried to do. There are good projects and weak projects. The good projects successfully resist the temptation to concentrate on quick results which make a good showing in statistical returns, to build community centres which aren't used and new pumps that aren't kept in working order. The good projects concentrate on three tedious, arduous tasks. The first is to persuade the villager to help himself; the second is to build up local leadership; the third is to persuade the villagers to cooperate under their own leaders to improve the amenities of the village -- the schools, the lanes, the sanitation. It is a programme of self-help, independent initiative, and mutual aid.

Everything depends on the people in charge of the project -- the director, his immediate assistants, and most important of all, the man at the bottom of the pyramid -- the man who is in charge of all the activities of the project in five or ten villages. This is the man who has been given the not very euphonious title, "all purpose village level worker". If India's programme for reforming its villages is to succeed, India must have tens of thousands of first class village level workers. They have to be recruited, trained and kept up to the mark.

This in itself is an immense task and it is only one of the many difficult tasks which India faces. India has to find and train efficient, keen and honest people for so many jobs. It needs skilled workmen and foremen and administrators for the new factories. Under a pitiless tropical sun and in a poor country it has to maintain high standards of competence and integrity.

The wonder is not that mistakes have been made but that so much has been accomplished against such odds.

As you go up and down India you can see the face of India changing.

I have myself seen how valleys have become lakes, how land that was brown has become green, how what was jungle has become a modern industrial town. I have seen in some community projects the beginnings of a revolution in village life and peasant agriculture. In these projects the peasants are beginning to adopt better methods of cultivation. They are beginning to use better seeds. They are beginning to use fertilizers. They are beginning to work together to build schools for their children and to make their villages healthier places to live in.

I am sure that other of the under-developed democratic countries, particularly those in South and South-East Asia, are beginning to show similar signs of progress and development. The common problems which the under-developed countries of South and South-East Asia are facing have brought them together as partners in the Colombo Plan. The success of the individual national development programmes, based on a spirit of international co-operation, may emerge as one of the finest achievements of our age.

Mr. Nehru loves to travel about India and see the progress that is being made. He finds it exciting to visit the new projects. Indeed I once heard him say in a public speech that he lives in a state of continuous excitement. He often speaks of his sense of high adventure when he contemplates what India is doing to make an economic and social revolution by peaceful and democratic means. He tries to communicate to the people of India his feeling of excitement at the high adventure they are engaged in.

Mr. Nehru understands the profound truth about economic development in an under-developed country such as India, that economic advance is not only good in itself, it is good because it gives the people of India more confidence in themselves and in their country, and the more confidence they have, the easier it is for them to withstand the divisive forces of regionalism, language, religion and caste, and the corrosive forces of under-employment, unemployment, sickness, hunger and hopelessness.

Mr. Nehru therefore realizes how important it is not only that there be economic advance in India but that as many Indians as possible realize that economic advance is taking place, and that they have a feeling of personal pride in the new monuments of national development - locomotive works, fertilizer factories, dams, power plants.

I have been fortunate in the period of my stay in India because it happened to coincide with the turning of the tide in India's economic affairs. India's leaders have much more hope today than they had two and a half years ago. One sign of this is that they are planning a second five year plan much larger than the present one. They believe it is essential not only to maintain the present pace of economic development but to speed it up. I am sure they are right in this.

Whether the pace of India's economic development can be speeded up to the extent necessary depends on many things, some within the control of India, some entirely or mainly outside its control, such as monsoons, political and economic developments abroad, and the extent of outside economic assistance. In the kind of world we live in no one can safely prophesy. But there are two things I can say with confidence. On the basis of past performance, India deserves to succeed. It is vitally important for us and for the whole world that India succeed.

The Indians are grateful to Canada for the fifty million dollars we have given them during the past four years to help them in their programmes of economic development. They are grateful that we no longer close our doors to immigrants from India. They do not always agree with every aspect of our foreign policy any more than we always agree with every aspect of their foreign policy, but they have a high respect for the knowledge and judgment of Mr. St. Laurent and Mr. Pearson and they appreciate the efforts the Canadian Government has made to understand India's point of view on international affairs and to narrow the gap between India's views and the views of ourselves and our allies.

There is, I can assure you, a very special feeling of friendship and respect for Canada in India.

When I return to India I shall tell my Indian friends of this conference on Canadian aid to under-developed countries. I know they will consider it as one further demonstration of the intelligent and generous interest which Canada takes in the problems of India and of other under-developed countries.