



# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
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No. 56/13 BROTHERHOOD BETWEEN NATIONS - THE COLOMBO PLAN

Excerpts from an address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson, to the Holy Blossom Temple Brotherhood, Toronto, February 20, 1956.

My pleasure at being with you this evening is increased by the realization that I am joining you in the celebration of Brotherhood Week. This week reminds us in a special way, though we should, of course, be aware of it every week, of our obligation to each other, to our community, and to our country in promoting the ideals of brotherhood and fellowship. Until these ideals are realized, based as they must be on tolerance and friendliness, on equality and non-discrimination, this country cannot become truly great; no matter how much our national income may increase each year, or how successfully our natural resources are developed. The surest foundation of a country's greatness lies in its human resources, and these can never minister to that greatness if there is racial or clan prejudice or arrogance; if there is disunity and suspicion between section and section, class and class, government and government.

Canada has been fortunate in these non-material aspects of our development but we have not, of course, fully achieved the ideal of brotherhood and unity which we have set before us. Our difficulties at home in this regard give some indication of the magnitude and complexity of the infinitely greater problems of brotherhood between nations, that gleaming vision of all good men. These problems are in all truth great enough to daunt even the most optimistic; even between nations which have basically similar values and background. They are far greater in the case of peoples of different civilizations, different traditions and ways of living. They become almost insuperable when they are between the Communist and non-Communist world, where a great gulf of ignorance and misunderstanding and fear separates those who must somehow, sometime, live together in peaceful co-operation, which is something different from peaceful co-existence, if this world is to survive at all.

There are moments, in this age of hydrogen and hate, where man has conquered the atom, but not himself, when one begins to despair even of such survival. Yet, it would be folly to take refuge from our fears in a cynical rejection of all effort, as impossible to the point of absurdity, which is designed to bring about world brotherhood. It is tempting, as it has been put, for "The embittered idealist, in terror of further disillusionment, to retreat from life to rock in the cradle of each passing sensation". It is a temptation which should be rejected by individuals and by governments. There is no cause for despair over the possibility of brotherhood being forever destroyed by bombs. Man faced with the sad memories and the grim consequences of his failure to live peacefully with other men, has many times accepted as inevitable a doom that he has somehow managed to escape. So it may be this time.

I, myself, had an experience last autumn which persuaded me that we are, in fact, enlarging and extending the boundaries of international brotherhood. I was visiting India and Pakistan, among other things to inspect the co-operative work of Canada with those countries under the Colombo Plan; a plan which is providing not only material help for peoples who need that help, but also a bridge of understanding and friendship between our Western world and that of free Asia

There are at least three valid reasons why we should co-operate with these free Asian countries in such mutual aid. One is a sincere humanitarian desire on the part of those who are materially more favoured to help those who are less. The second is the recognition that it is our own interest to live in a world where prosperity is more universal; that the more quickly other people's standard of living can rise, the better off all of us will be. The third, is the hope that economic aid can serve the cause of peace; because the stronger any free nation is, the less chance there is of aggression and war.

It is important, however, to guard against the idea that we can purchase or should try to purchase allies in that part of the world. Communist propaganda is insinuating this interpretation throughout Asia, and it is important to give it the lie. The East will not become a mercenary in our ranks. It would be deplorable if Asians believed that Westerners had insulted their dignity, or misread their independence, by entertaining such notions.

If we of the West provide material aid only or primarily for cold-war motives, we are likely to fail in achieving any good and permanent result. If, however, we help out of a recognition of brotherhood, with our free Asian neighbours, then we shall succeed in improving the political atmosphere as well as in promoting human welfare. Good-will is contagious.

This Colombo Plan is succeeding because it is based on good-will - if you like - on brotherhood. During my visit to India, I had the honour of opening a power and irrigation project which is now known as the "Canada Dam", situated a couple of hundred miles north of Calcutta. It is in a part of India where the inhabitants, because of shortage of water and lack of irrigation facilities have for centuries tried to scrape out a bare existence from the hard, dry, soil, and have often failed even to do that. This Canada Dam, however, will provide modern irrigation facilities for 600,000 acres of land, and enable that land to produce two crops a year. The people there know what that means, so when I pressed the button that sent great floods of water rushing down the spill-way and out the irrigation canal, the Indian peasants and tribesmen who had come on foot, or in bullock cart, from miles around in their thousands to witness this great day, which meant so much for them, gave a shout that must have reached almost to Canada. It gave also to those of us who were there from Canada a reality to the words "Colombo Plan" that one could never get merely from talking or writing about it.

Similarly with the great Warsak hydro-electric project that we are building with the Pakistanis on their Northwest Frontier. This is brotherhood in action without any strings attached. It is a far cry from the offers of steel plants and military equipment to be purchased by Asian governments from the Soviet state in the hope that certain Communist political objectives may be achieved.

We in the West have no wish to compete with Communist dictatorial regimes in their offers, some of them cynically hypocritical, of material assistance, dictated by political considerations arising out of Communist policy which, in the long run, can mean only trouble for those peoples who come under its influence. We can, however, successfully compete with them - if we wish to, as we should - in sympathetic understanding and good neighbourliness as the basis for mutual aid. These qualities are more important even than the material value of such aid. We in the Western countries would be well advised to remember this as we face the problems of competitive co-existence and the contest for the hearts and souls and the friendship of the uncommitted millions of Asia. ....

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