

External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

No. 54/13 PRIME MINISTER'S RADIO BROADCAST FROM COLOMBO

An address by the Prime Minister, Mr. St. Laurent, to
the people of Ceylon, delivered by radio from Colombo,
March 3, 1954.

I am indeed grateful for this opportunity of speaking to the people of Ceylon. I bring you warm and friendly greetings from the people of Canada. My daughter, my son, the other members of our party and I have all been deeply touched by the friendliness which has surrounded us since our arrival in Ceylon Sunday afternoon. We are also most grateful to His Excellency, the Governor-General, to your distinguished Prime Minister, Sir John Kotelawala, to your Government and to my good friend, Mr. Dudley Senanayake, for the very cordial hospitality they have extended to us. Your Island and your people are indeed as hospitable and attractive as I have always imagined them to be.

We Canadians have always thought of Ceylon as a lovely, tropical land of coconut palms and spice groves and tea gardens. We know, too, something of your history, reaching back into mythological times - the legend of your Singha; the ancient irrigation works built by your early kings, some of which are operating even today; and your many noble capitals which still reveal the artistic genius of your people. We have been glad to learn more of all this during our stay in Kandy, just as we were glad to see something of present day activities like the rapid development of the new university campus and halls at Peradeniya.

During the past few years, Canadians have also begun to learn something of your day-to-day life and your practical problems. We had already watched with great interest your constitutional development which culminated in 1948 in your becoming like ourselves a democratic self-governing member of the Commonwealth.

In the succeeding years Ceylonese and Canadians have often met and worked together. I have had the privilege of meeting both the late Mr. D.S. Senanayake, that great Ceylonese patriot and staunch friend of freedom, and his son, Mr. Dudley Senanayake, at conferences of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London. And as you may remember, our Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Pearson, and Mr. Mayhew, now our Ambassador to Japan, attended the conference of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers which gave birth to the Colombo Plan in 1950.

It is fitting that your capital should have given its name to this great endeavour. Since that time many Canadians have visited Ceylon, some of them staying to work under the Colombo Plan alongside those working under other auspices. Last year we asked you to receive our first High Commissioner, Mr. J.J. Hurley. A few months later Mr. Sinclair, our Minister of Fisheries, visited Ceylon and brought back to us an enthusiastic report about your developments. At the same time our people at home have been reading and learning more about your country, your requirements from other lands and your

own exportable surpluses.

It is perhaps no accident that our membership in the Commonwealth has done so much to draw us together. As the late Mr. D.S. Senanayake said in your House of Representatives in February, 1950, "The influence of the Commonwealth as far as Asia is concerned has been to give the Asian peoples freedom and democratic institutions."

Now it is of course, the peoples of the Asian countries themselves and those of the United Kingdom who deserve the main credit for this happy evolution. But other Commonwealth countries, Canada in particular, had played a leading part in creating the sort of Commonwealth into which the new Asian members could find a fitting and helpful place. We Canadians are proud of our membership in this new Commonwealth in which people of every race and colour and creed can work together on a basis of freedom, equality and complete national independence. We also hope that it soon may be possible for Ceylon to join the United Nations, for we feel that Ceylon can make a very worthwhile contribution to its important work.

We are glad that we are able to co-operate with Ceylon through the Colombo Plan. The splendid efforts you are making to improve the economic conditions of your people have won our admiration and respect. I sincerely hope that your technical aid and capital assistance in such fields as your fishing industry and your rural electrification programme will prove of real value to the people of Ceylon.

This economic co-operation suggests that, in practical matters, there are similarities between our two countries.

Canada, like Ceylon, is a nation composed of people of different races, languages and religions and we, too, have a majority and minority groups. Through the exercise of patience and, I think, some good sense, we have built a nation in which all groups work pretty harmoniously together, each making its own contribution to the welfare of the whole. Like you also, our economic prosperity depends to a substantial degree on active world trade.

I have been particularly impressed with the atmosphere of kindness and gentleness I have found in Ceylon. This, I have no doubt, derives from the noble spiritual heritage which you so proudly cherish. A people who, over the centuries, have acquired habits of mind such as yours are bound to be a people who live together harmoniously, dealing justly and honourably with one another.

This tour is for me a voyage of discovery. Unlike the wanderers of ancient days who found their way in ships into havens such as your storied port of Colombo, I am travelling through the air and setting down at large airports like Ratmalana. I am, nevertheless, a discoverer, for this is the first time it has been my privilege to visit Asia. Indeed, it is the first time that any Prime Minister of Canada has travelled so far from home and I am happy to feel that our people unanimously approved of my doing so at this time.

I have come by way of Europe and India and Pakistan. When I leave you I shall go on to Indonesia, to the Philippines and from there to Korea and Japan. At this mid-way point of my tour in Asia I want to tell you that I am thankful I decided to make this trip. I came to see for myself something of the countries of Asia, to meet and talk with members of some Asian governments and with other people in Asian countries. I wanted to show you that we wish to continue to be your friends and to learn more about you who are our friends. We know that friendship can be of great value to us, in the West, and we hope it will be of value to you also.

I regret that there are many important countries in Southeast Asia which time will not allow me to visit, but the welcome I have received in Ceylon and in the other countries I have so far visited has strengthened my conviction that there is a very real and abiding basis for mutual help and co-operation between Asian and Western peoples. I have naturally been struck by the many differences between your part of the world and mine, differences in the climate and natural surroundings and in the temperament and ways of life of the people, and in the great undertakings of the past and those of our own times. But what has impressed me far more deeply and forcefully is that the fundamental needs and aspirations of Asian peoples are the same as those of our own people, and that our common humanity has, in the past and does still transcend all those differences. Man's artistic and technical processes have varied throughout the ages and in the various lands where he has lived but they have always reflected the duality of his nature and his desire to satisfy both his physical needs and higher aspirations of his immaterial spirit.

I am very happy to have been able to spend these few short days in your country and, in departing, I pray that fortune may continue to smile upon you and upon Ceylon!
Sri Lanka!



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