

External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

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Summary of what the Prime Minister, Mr. St. Laurent, has been saying to different groups during his visit to India. (February 28, 1954)

I have long wanted to come to India. I have now come to the end of a visit that has exceeded even my expectations.

I came a long way to bring to you, the people of India, the warm greetings of the people of Canada. Canada is, like India, a big country but we have only 15 million people compared with your population of 365 million.

This week I have been in India is one of the most fruitful weeks in the whole seventy-two years of my life. I have talked to a large number of your leaders, I have talked to your civil servants, to your newspapermen and to your villagers. I have seen something of your ancient monuments and the great work which you are now doing for the reconstruction of your country.

I have been particularly happy to meet in your villages and your cities some of your children and to see the work which you are doing in India for the youth of your country.

Canada, like India, believes that one of her most priceless possessions is the youth of her country. Men of my age may perhaps think that they are important but we are not important for very long. Children everywhere in the world are important and the children of the villages and cities of India are important. They will pass on from generation to generation the things they have learned from working and living together.

I am very pleased to congratulate you on the magnificent results that are coming out of your cooperative work to improve your conditions. I have seen a community centre in one of your villages. That community centre is, to my mind, a symbol of the community interest of all of us. I would like to see many community centres in all of the nations of the world because when we are meeting together in a community centre we realize that, although we all have faults, each one of us has good qualities.

I have been almost embarrassed by the great kindness shown to me by your Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru. He spent many hours and had many conversations with me in order to help me to understand the background of the social and economic life of the people of India, of whom he is so proud and to whom he is so devoted. I am going back to Canada feeling I have had a new education. I hope that this will be of some value in maintaining and strengthening the cordial good relations between the people of Canada and the people of India.

In Canada, we have the same aspirations as you in India. We have the same need of peace and stability which you have. We, like you, can succeed in our high adventure of economic and social development only if we do have peace and security.

Whether we live on your side of the world or over on the other side, we are all human beings of the same kind and we all have the same aspirations and the same joys and sorrows. Among the joys, there are none greater than the good feeling and the goodwill of our fellow citizens.

Today, more than ever before, everyone wants peace but in order to have peace in the world we must behave like human beings so that we can increase the welfare of us all rather than spend our time devising new means of destroying our fellow world citizens.

I think the international situation is improving somewhat and that we can now hope for some sanity in the world. Certainly we have not been behaving sanely this century. There is nothing so futile and insane as to destroy each other in war. No one wins by it. It leads to nothing but misery and destruction and pain and anguish - and the reputation of being unable to behave as intelligent people.

I hope we all know now that if we go to war again, there are now on both sides instruments of mass destruction so terrible that they would probably leave the civilization of this century as vague and uncertain to future inhabitants of this globe as is to us the past of those great cities in this sub-continent which flourished 5000 years ago, and whose remains show that there must have been then a really advanced and polished civilization.

I do not know what cataclysms made them disappear and leave only traces of their past existence. But I am hoping that we are not going to have one of those cataclysms which will make of this advanced civilization of the twentieth century something of which there will be no other trace a thousand years hence than some stone and metal remains and inscriptions to testify that we did have an opportunity of leading happy lives and were not sufficiently intelligent to make use of those advantages but that we used the great energies and powers that Providence had allowed us to discover for the purpose of destroying each other. I hope that is not going to happen and I am optimistic enough to believe that it is not going to happen.

I am hopeful that we shall learn to live as one family. I was brought up to say in my prayers, "Our Father" not "My Father" or "Your Father", but the Father of us all. We should all be happy to work together as the children of the one great holy family of mankind.

It is with regret that I leave India. I wish I could have stayed here longer. I go back to Canada with my admiration, respect and affection for the people of India strengthened and deepened. I take back to my people in Canada a very blessed memory. Long live India and long live the friendship between India and Canada. Jai Hind!

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