



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 54/3 THE PRIME MINISTER'S ROUND-THE-WORLD TOUR

Statement made in the House of Commons on January 29, 1954, by the Prime Minister, Mr. St. Laurent, concerning his proposed trip to Europe and Asia.

... I do not need to remind anyone that as Canada has developed in the past fifteen years, and as the nations of the world have become more and more dependent upon one another, the extent of the relations of this country, not only with our immediate neighbours and with other members of the Commonwealth, but with all countries, has increased at an astonishing rate. You will recall that it was as recently as 1926 that Canada named her first diplomatic representative abroad. In the intervening twenty-seven years we have established diplomatic relations with over forty countries. In addition, through our contribution in two world wars, our membership in the League of Nations, the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and our close association with the other members of the Commonwealth, we have come to play an even larger role in the councils of the world. Our external policy has acquired a growing importance in the thinking of our people, and the importance of external relations has been reflected in the debates in the House and in practically all aspects of the activities of those who are charged with the responsibilities of government. I think that fact is well illustrated by the fact that later today the unanimous consent of the house is expected to be given to a rather extraordinary debate upon external affairs.

An indication of Canada's increasing place in international affairs is to be seen also in the number of recent official visits paid to us here in Ottawa. Since the war, in addition to the royal visit of our gracious Sovereign and her consort, before her accession to the throne, we have been honoured by visits from such distinguished Commonwealth leaders as Sir Winston Churchill, Mr. Nehru, the late Liaquat Ali Khan, Mr. Atlee, Mr. Menzies and Mr. Holland. Prominent visitors from other lands have included the former president of France, Mr. Vincent Auriol; the Chancellor of Germany, Dr. Konrad Adenauer; the former Prime Minister of Italy, Mr. de Gasperi; Crown Prince Akihito of Japan; the former President of the United States, Mr. Truman; and, at the beginning of this session of our new parliament, President Eisenhower. It is partly with a view to repaying some of these courtesies that I am making this tour.

Another purpose of my journey is to see for myself the conditions existing in other parts of the world and to assure the governments of those countries of the sincerity of our desire to co-operate with them in our own interests as well as in theirs. I am sure you will agree that it is important for us as Canadians to understand these conditions abroad and to have our own conditions

understood abroad in order that we may all try to adopt the best course in our relations with each other.

Of course I do not feel that I should be absent from Canada for too long a period, especially while parliament is in session, and it will not be possible for me to make a long stay in any one country; but this is no doubt the most appropriate season to visit the east. By taking advantage of air travel I will try to make the best possible use of what time will be available. From the conversations I will have with the leaders of many countries I shall visit, I hope that I shall be able to bring back with me and also to leave behind not only useful information but perhaps a clearer picture of the problems which all of us have to face together.

I have wanted for some time to visit Australia and New Zealand, both because I should like to see those sister countries of the Commonwealth with which our relations have become so close, and also because we have recently, been honoured by the visit of their Prime Ministers. The time available, however, would have been regrettably short and my visit to Australia would have taken place at a time when Her Majesty the Queen will still be in that country. I therefore proposed to the Prime Ministers of Australia and New Zealand, for that reason, and I can assure the House that it is for that reason alone - that my visit to their countries be postponed, and to this they kindly agreed. But I sincerely hope that such a visit may be arranged in the not too distant future. In fact, you know, it is not very much more difficult to go by air from this continent to Australia and New Zealand than it is to go there by air from Tokyo, from which point it had been originally planned that I would set off to visit Australia and New Zealand.

Europe, which I shall visit during the first part of my tour, is faced at present with a decision of great importance. Our own future may be quite largely influenced by its outcome. The presence of our soldiers and our airmen over there is an indication of our interest in the maintenance of some efficient method of collective protection against aggression, and I think all members will feel that this method is apt to be all the more efficient if we can all participate in it.

But the main purpose of my tour is a visit to Asia. That vast continent, which contains in fact well over half the world's population, was once a vague and rather romantic concept far over the horizon for most of us in this part of the world. Today we are vitally concerned with what happens in Asia. This concern arises both from our membership in the United Nations and from our membership in the Commonwealth which now includes three important Asian countries, India, Pakistan and Ceylon.

We have joined with other members of the United Nations in helping to repel aggression in Korea. Only a few months ago our troops were engaged in actual and violent fighting, which I trust will not be renewed. I look forward to visiting these troops during my brief stay in Korea and to bringing them greetings from all Canadians.

Our interest in Asia has also been increased as a result of the desire of our people to assist our Asian friends to improve their social and economic conditions. For several years we have been contributing quite substantially to United Nations efforts in this field and for the past three years we have also been spending more than \$25 million a year for this purpose through the Colombo plan. These facts give some indication of how important Asia has become in our lives. Decisions taken there, and the welfare and happiness of these peoples, have become of real concern to us.

Canada, I think, has welcomed the opportunity to share in the encouragement of freedom and economic improvement in Asia because we realize the importance of maintaining good relations between the Western world and the hundreds of millions of our fellow men in these ancient nations of Asia. I feel that we can maintain good relations with them only as long as we treat them on terms of complete equality, with respect for their older and perhaps somewhat less materialistic culture and achievements, and in a spirit of genuine understanding and co-operation. We must deal with them in the realization that while we may seem to have much to give they too have a very important contribution to make to the general welfare of the world...

s/c