

THE COLOMBO PLAN

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Many countries in the world are celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Colombo Plan. My own country, Australia, has long been intimately connected with the Plan—in fact since that day, some eleven years ago, when the then Australian Foreign Minister, Sir Percy Spender, put his idea before the Foreign Ministers of British Commonwealth countries gathered at Colombo in Ceylon.

Looking back over ten years of the Colombo Plan, there is no doubt in my mind that its most worthwhile feature has been the way in which it has drawn together our two countries like a set of grappling irons, and enabled both you and ourselves to board as friends, the ships of culture—similar yet separate—on which our two peoples sail.

B.C.—Before Colombo—we knew one another as friends and allies—partners in a bitter war—but our contacts were short-term ones, based

on little real understanding of the lives and hopes of our respective peoples or the detail of the problems, big and small, which each of us faced.

After Colombo, our relationships were put on a permanent and formally organized basis in many different ways (S.E.A.T.O., for instance), but the symbol and the vehicle for our growing association in great measure has been the Colombo Plan.

The direct effects of the Colombo Plan are readily noticed and easily identified—you here in the University will be aware of these effects and be living amongst them, at work, in your homes and in your social and professional relationships—for an overwhelming number of you alumni and faculty members have gone to Australia to further their studies or to take specialised training and they have gone—not only to learn but to teach—to bring something of the warmth and variety of Philippine life into

Australian homes, schools and Universities; to make Australian friends; to talk about your problems; and to publicise your country and your culture in all the cities and states of Australia. They come back with a knowledge of Australia and its problems; of Australians and their way of life, and they discuss it all with their friends and associates.

At the same time, the machinery works in reverse and many Australian visitors, from a wide variety of fields, come to the Philippines under the auspices of the Colombo Plan. They too return home with an extensive first hand knowledge of this country—a knowledge which can only be of mutual benefit to both countries.

Again, directly under the Colombo Plan, the Governments of the Philippines and Australia in partnership have initiated various large-scale projects to spur on and expand the developing economy of this country—the construction of an Artificial Limb Factory at the new National Orthopaedic Hospital in Quezon City is a case in point—here the Philippine Government is constructing the building in which the factory will be housed and the Australian Government is providing the

machinery on which skilled Filipino hands will manufacture artificial limbs for the less fortunate of their countrymen.

On a Government level, it makes it possible for countries to base their policies on a more accurate knowledge of their neighbours; on an individual level, it brings into close association a variety of peoples. In terms of economics, it possesses advantages for all partners; and, culturally, it enriches the life of member nations.

I turn now to the indirect effects of the Colombo Plan.

The Colombo Plan, because in practice it tends to be limited rather strictly to Government to Government relationships, has a direct effect largely confined to the public sector of our societies. Yet these societies are democratically organized and based on the principle of freedom for the individual and, within the limits of the law, his right to engage in such enterprise as he may consider to be worthwhile. As a result, there has grown up in the Philippines, as in Australia, a large and flourishing world of private enterprise. And almost alone among countries of this region, the Philippines harbours in this pool of private enterprise not only the executives

and employees of business and industrial endeavour, but an extensive population of fine brains and sensitive minds—doctors, scientists, lawyers, historians, writers, architects, painters, and musicians.

Not the least of the indirect effects of the Plan on Philippine-Australian relations has been that we in Australia have become aware of the existence of this finely-trained and culturally brilliant pool of persons and have developed informal and private contacts with them. Interested organizations have invited them to Australia and have held discussions with them—for instance the Asian Pacific Conference of Cardiology which was attended by twelve of your senior specialists in heart surgery. Or again there is the recent visit to Australia of the outstanding violinist from Negros, Gilopez Kabayao. On the other hand, some of our best men from this same corner of the private sector have called on their counterparts here—for instance, Dr. Ewen Downie, the world-renowned Australian specialist in diabetes or Archbishop Eris O'Brien, who is a prominent Australian historian in his own right. And numerous other examples of exchanges of this sort can be isolated.

It is one of the many virtues of the Colombo Plan that we in Australia, through it, have become aware of the rich resources of brilliance which are to be found in the Philippines and following up our discovery, have been able to tap these resources. Unfortunately, however, there remains one difficulty which prevents us exploiting these resources in depth, because to date, they have been judged to fall outside the strict territory of the Colombo Plan—even though, I assure, you, the Colombo Plan principle is wide enough to accommodate the exploitation of such resources.

In the first ten years, we have launched the Colombo Plan and built a strong rapport between our two Governments and our respective public sectors. It is my sincere hope that the Colombo Plan will be expanded and developed —broadened—not only to include these very well worthwhile contacts between Government and Government, but between the professional spheres of private enterprise. This is the task the accomplishment of which I see as the paramount objective of the Colombo Plan as it enters upon its second decade.