

SPEECH BY THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF SINGAPORE, SIR JOHN WHYATT, AT THE PRESENTATION OF LAW BOOKS BY THE U.S. CONSUL-GENERAL IN THE SUPREME COURT AT 9.30 A.M. ON FRIDAY, AUGUST 1, 1958.

I thank you most sincerely, Mr. Peterson, and through you, the United States Government, for this excellent gift of law books to the Library of the Supreme Court of Singapore.

They include the names of some of the great jurists of the United States, amongst them Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, one of the greatest judges of his generation whose classic work "The Common Law" is quoted wherever that system of law is followed, and Chief Justice John Marshall whose memorable judgments on constitutional and international law have enriched the jurisprudence of the civilised world.

They are names which proudly take their place with Henry of Bracton, the Father of English jurisprudence, and Coke and Blackstone and others who form that mighty company who, from the 13th Century onwards, have fostered and inspired the growth of the common law.

As these books show, the intermingling of British and American jurisprudence has continued in modern time, for they include the writings of one of the most brilliant academic lawyers of the present day - Professor Goodhart, Master of University College, Oxford, Editor of the Law Quarterly Review and, withall, an American citizen.

This collection of books will be given a special place in the Supreme Court Library in the same way as I observed when I visited Harvard University that a collection of Blackstone's works are accorded a place of honour in the Harvard Law Library. They will thus be readily available to the legal profession but, perhaps more important, they will be accessible to the students of the newly-founded Law Faculty in the University of Malaya who, by special arrangement, make use of this Library in addition to the library facilities provided by the University.

Here, the students will find, expounded with clarity and authority, the principles of the common law which have endured throughout the centuries because they depend, not upon the changing will of rulers, but upon reason and justice. These principles have spread to many parts of the world, both East and West, and wherever they have taken root they have neverfailed to promote the common good.

These books will help to pass on and stimulate knowledge and respect for the common law, in particular for that fundamental principle of the common law which is the bulwark of our freedom, that all men, including the rulers of men, are equal before the law.

The words of the anonymous scribe in one of the Year Books are as true today as they were when they were written in the 15th Century: "The common law is the surest and best inheritance that any subject hath, et qui perde ceo perde tout."

Mr. Consul-General, I thank you.

AUGUST 1, 1958.

(Time issued 0900 hours)