

## BACKGROUND

### Lester B. Pearson

Lester Bowles 'Mike' Pearson was born in Newtonbrook, Ontario, on April 23, 1897. He graduated with a B.A. from the University of Toronto in 1919, and in 1923 received his M.A. from Oxford University. Mr. Pearson joined the Department of External Affairs in 1928 and, after a posting in London, served in Washington, first as Minister-Counsellor, then as Ambassador to the United States.

The United Nations Charter was signed in San Francisco on June 26, 1945. Mr. Pearson was involved in the diplomacy which led to the creation of the United Nations Organization, first at the preliminary conference at Dumbarton Oaks in 1944, and then as a senior Canadian advisor to the founding conference. Throughout his career, Mr. Pearson strongly supported the UN in its efforts to secure global peace, and he was very active in the General Assembly and in a number of its organizations.

In September 1946, Mr. Pearson returned to Ottawa as Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs and two years later he became Secretary of State for External Affairs. He won a by-election in 1948 and represented Algoma East until his retirement from politics. From 1963 to 1968 he served as Prime Minister; his legacy includes a new flag for Canada, measures to improve the conditions and opportunities for Francophones in government, universal medicare, the Canada Pension Plan and the unification of the armed forces. He died in Ottawa on December 27, 1972.

The Nobel Prize for Peace was first awarded on December 10, 1901, the fifth anniversary of Nobel's death. The Prize is given only when the Committee deems there has been a significant contribution to world peace by an individual or an institution. When Lester B. Pearson won the award in 1957, there had not been a winner for two years.

In 1988, the Nobel Peace Prize was presented to the United Nations to mark 40 years of service as an international peacekeeper. Canada has participated in virtually every UN peacekeeping initiative and in four non-UN missions as well. The UN blue beret has been worn by more service personnel from Canada (more than 80 000) than from any other nation.