



## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
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No. 48/43 : "THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS"

An address by Mr. L. B. Pearson, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the 27th Annual Conference of the Canadian Teachers' Federation at the Chateau Laurier, Ottawa, August 11, 1948.

As an ex-teacher, I am always at home in a gathering of teachers, especially when I do not have to make a speech. However, when your Secretary some weeks ago asked me to address you, I found it difficult to refuse. In wondering what I should talk about, I naturally put my audience and my present profession together and arrived at the subject "The Role of the Teacher in International Affairs". This is a subject, of course, which lends itself to platitudes and I suspect that you have already, during this Convention, had more than enough platitudes directed at you. I will do my best to avoid the obvious, but it is nevertheless true to say that some phrases have become platitudes because they are so essentially true and important that they are repeated over and over again. One of these is the vital role of the educator in our contemporary life, which includes international life.

Education is now far more than learning the three R's. I heard it defined not long ago in a striking way as "the creation of finer human hungers". One such hunger should be for good citizenship, for freedom, for tolerance, for understanding which is the only basis for sound nationalism and likewise the only basis for good internationalism. In this field the role of the teacher is all-important, though the difficulties confronting him in successfully playing this role are formidable. These difficulties arise out of the complexities and confusions of modern life, out of the great gap between scientific and social progress. We have made astounding advances in the natural and physical sciences. We have literally changed the face of the world. Above all, we have released atomic energy. But we shrink with fear from the results of that release. Why? Because we live in a world of social and political anarchy. Because we are afraid we will blow ourselves to pieces with what we have discovered. Because in 1948 our international morality is that of the stone age. Because we cling to old ideas in a new world.

The bankruptcy of the political and moral ideals of our time has been tragically demonstrated in two world wars and one world depression. I do not envy the teacher who has to explain that bankruptcy to the students of today who are understandably cynical about the failure of their elders, forgetting that their elders of today were the young of twenty-five years ago who, in turn, blamed their elders and vowed that it would not happen again. The youth of today, while serious, is suspicious; while progressive, is somewhat arrogant. There is no point in mouthing to them the old platitudes about international goodwill, international freedom, peace and understanding; just leave it to your elders, all will be well and eventually we will sign another peace pact outlawing war.