



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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An address given by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Hon. L.B. Pearson, on September 21, 1948, to the Ontario Municipal Association, Kingston, Ontario

This is my first public speech since I took the long and unusual jump from the Civil Service to politics. I am encouraged in making it, the speech, not the jump, by the knowledge that I am talking to men and women who also have accepted the responsibilities and the opportunities of public service.

The morning after I was honoured by being appointed to the Cabinet, I was asked by an American journalist in Ottawa how long I had been a Liberal. Somewhat to his amazement, I replied "Since last evening at 5 o'clock, when I was sworn in as a member of the Privy Council". Lest he should misunderstand me, I went on to explain that, until the moment I was sworn in, I had been a member of the Civil Service of Canada for 20 odd years, and that Civil Servants in Canada had no politics. Of course, the fact that I had joined a Liberal administration may have indicated to him that if I had not been a Civil Servant I might possibly have been a Liberal long before that 5 p.m. hour which I have just mentioned.

It is, I think, a healthy and indeed an essential condition that members of the Civil Service should be servants of the state and not servants of a Party. Without the whole-hearted acceptance of this fact, democratic government cannot be effective, honest and impartial, or likely to survive. We should do nothing in this country to make such acceptance difficult. In my own career, I have had the honour to serve both Conservative and Liberal Administrations, and I don't think I have ever been accused of not giving my best to either party while it was responsible for the government of our country. That is the way it should be and that, with very rare exceptions indeed, is the way it is in the Civil Service in Ottawa. It is one of the strong points in our governmental system. Because of my own experience and because of my own views on the matter, I have been reading with some interest certain newspaper comment on "politics in the Civil Service" which my recent change of status has inspired. So far as I am aware, certainly in the Department in which I have worked, politics do not enter the Civil Service and I would regret it very much if my resignation from that Service and my entry into the political service, should suggest that they do.

The Civil Service is an honourable and responsible career. If trained and qualified men cannot be attracted to it and remain satisfied in it, good government becomes very difficult indeed. That is why I hope we will not reach a position in Canada, which has been reached

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