



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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CANADA'S ROLE IN THE UNITED NATIONS

An address by Mr. Escott Reid of the Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, at the Canadian Institute on Public Affairs, Lake Couchiching, Ontario, August 13, 1947.

In my talk this morning I shall try to give you a factual, though necessarily general, account of the Canadian contribution to the development of the United Nations since the San Francisco Conference.

It would be inappropriate for me as a civil servant to suggest that Canadian policy in relation to the United Nations has been without error of omission or commission. It would be equally inappropriate for me to suggest possible errors in our policy. I hope, however, that my remarks may help to provide you with a basis upon which you may draw your own conclusions on the adequacy, thus far, of Canadian policy. I believe you will conclude that this policy has shown a pattern of consistency and has had a wholesome, if not always a spectacular, effect during the important formative years of the United Nations and that Canada will have an even more important and exacting role to play in the future.

In assessing the adequacy thus far of Canadian policy in relation to the United Nations, it is necessary to take into account the limitations upon the influence of a secondary power like Canada. Mr. St. Laurent, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, in his Grey Foundation Lecture at the University of Toronto on January 13, 1947, after stating that one of the basic principles of Canadian foreign policy today is willingness to accept international responsibilities and readiness to take its part in constructive international action, went on to say:

"We have, of course, been forced to keep in mind the limitations upon the influence of any secondary power. No society of nations can prosper if it does not have the support of those who hold the major share of the world's military and economic power. There is little point in a country of our stature recommending international action, if those who must carry the major burden of whatever action is taken are not in sympathy. We know, however, that the development of international organizations on a broad scale is of the very greatest importance to us, and we have been willing to play our role when it was apparent that significant and effective action was contemplated."