

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 49/24

WESTERN EUROPE AND AMERICAN SECURITY:

MAKING A NORTH ATLANTIC PACT

Text of an address by Mr. L. B. Pearson,  
Secretary of State for External Affairs,  
to the Mount Holyoke College Institute  
of the United Nations at South Hadley,  
Massachusetts, on Friday, July 8, 1949.

Western diplomats and foreign ministers seem to have recently abandoned the custom of orally unveiling brave new worlds and eagerly anticipating friendly cooperation and the rule of law in world affairs. They now seem to prefer cautious warnings against undue optimism at any particular turn in international events. Is this because diplomats are basically cynical people, indifferent to the universal desire for security and peace? Or is it because they were recently so dazzled by the vanished image of a glowing future that they are now blind to the hope of better international relations? Whatever the answer may be, it is perhaps significant that a common cautious approach to many major international issues seems now to prevail among western leaders.

There is also, I think, general agreement about the nature and the proportions of the task facing the West in the struggle for the kind of a world which decent people desire and deserve. That agreement, however, is not likely to express itself in policy and action, unless the views and conclusions of those whose business it is to study foreign affairs appeal to the common sense -- the informed common sense -- of the average citizen.

Taxpayers need no reminding that foreign policy, and even more, the lamentable results of the failure of foreign policy, costs them at the present time far more money than ever before. This realization has itself, however, caused a development of great importance. Because expenditures for foreign affairs have to be supported in the legislatures of the western democracies, the impact of public opinion on foreign policy is now more general, immediate and direct than ever before. It is, therefore, correspondingly more important that opinion be informed and intelligent.

I do not suggest that the hard-pressed citizen should study international balance of payments figures, to the exclusion of baseball scores, or forsake Bob Hope completely for a scrutiny of the clauses of the Treaty of Peace with Bulgaria. I submit, however, that the main direction of western foreign policy must find very broad public acceptance and public understanding, both amongst the experts and the casually interested. Nor should such understanding and acceptance be spasmodic and intermittent. The basic design for peace cannot be changed half way through its construction, any more than the shape of a house can be transformed as the walls go up.

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