

GOVERNMENT  
  
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STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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INFORMATION DIVISION  
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NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY - II

Text of a statement delivered in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Pearson, on March 28, 1949.

Mr. Speaker, the discussion of this resolution has been encouraging; indeed it has been an inspiring example, if I may say so, of parliamentary unity, and a reflection of national unity in a fundamental question of international policy. It has shown that no matter how vigorously we may differ on domestic matters -- as we should, in a healthy democracy -- in the house and in the country we face as a united people the problems of peace and collective security.

Those who have the privilege of signing this treaty for Canada next week will, in fact as well as in theory, sign it as the representatives, -- and indeed servants -- of the parliament of Canada and the whole people of Canada, except those of communist belief who clamour and scramble on the fringes of our national life.

Tonight I wish to say a few words about the background leading up to this draft treaty and, if I may, explain as briefly as possible the articles of the draft text, during which time I hope to deal with one or two of the matters raised by previous speakers.

At the end of the second world war, as has already been pointed out in the house, relief that the terrible struggle had been brought to a victorious end was combined with the determination that the disaster should not be repeated. The free people of the world, at shattering cost and desperate suffering, had defended or regained their liberties. They had vindicated the faith that lay behind their political institutions and proved the strength of their democratic way of life. They now demanded, in terms that could not be mistaken by any government, that, in the future trial by such hard ordeal should not again be necessary. As they surveyed a background of the years of war through which they had come, they saw many occasions when the free nations, if they had acted in harmony and in strength, might have dissipated the danger of German aggression without war. Too late they discovered that the tools which might have meant their salvation had been ready to their hands, if they had only had the courage to use them.

The last war, then, taught us at least this one lesson, that the nations must act together to keep the peace, and as the instrument for such collective action, some effective international organization must be set up.

The first consequence of this lesson was the founding of the United Nations. The charter, signed at San Francisco in 1945, is a long and complicated document, but its purpose is simple. Member states agree to act together; to resist aggression wherever it may occur; to co-operate for the purpose of removing the causes of war. In the United Nations they established an international agency which they thought at that time would be satisfactory for these purposes. But as has already been pointed out by more than one speaker today, the mood of 1945 was too optimistic. It was natural, then, that the nations which by their united effort had won the greatest war in history against the most ruthless and determined enemy that man had up to that time known, should believe that they could accomplish