

GOVERNMENT

OF CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

49/15

"CANADA AND THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY"

Text of an address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Pearson, delivered at the Spring Meeting (Third Session, Dinner Meeting) of the Academy of Political Science, Hotel Astor, New York City, Thursday, April 7, 1949.

In this company of scholars, and at this moment in history, I am led inevitably to speculate upon the more permanent implications of the North Atlantic Treaty which has just been signed in Washington. My own experience as a teacher of history is not so remote that I can resist this temptation. I know, of course, from that experience, that almost any attempt I make to relate the North Atlantic Treaty to events in the past, or to project it upon the screen of the future, will involve me unwittingly in some kind of historical heresy. Fortunately, however, this is a dinner, and not a discussion meeting, and my heresies, whatever they may be, cannot therefore be denounced; at least, not until I have departed.

I am sure that the members of this organization have, during these days been doing their own speculating -- casting their minds back over the past and forward into the future of the peoples who find themselves in this new and significant alliance. From the point of view of a citizen of Canada, one of the members of this new international community, I should like to make the same kind of experiment.

The important question, of course, is whether the North Atlantic Treaty is only a temporary and limited expedient, or whether it marks a new and far-reaching development in the course of international relations. This is a question of substance, because the way it is answered by the member governments will affect the way they act as parts of the new community. I know that in your capital city as in mine, there are many buildings hastily constructed to meet some temporary emergency. In this context, the meaning of the word temporary has a way of being stretched out, until it is hard to distinguish between what is temporary and what is permanent. People who live or work in these temporary structures often wish that a better effort had been made to forecast the duration for which the need would exist, and that the building had been better done. We shall, within a few days, begin to build the structure for which the North Atlantic Treaty is a ground plan. For this reason, I think we should take a long look into the future, and consider how permanent a contribution the North Atlantic Treaty may make to the progress of international relations.

There can be no question that the alliance has been formed to meet an emergency, arising out of a threat to the security of its members. We had hoped that this security had already been assured by developments in its international organization since the war. Canada sent its delegation to San Francisco optimistically, encouraged by the example of international co-operation which had won the war. Canadians made their contribution to the physical rebuilding of the post-war world, through UNRRA, through military aid to liberated countries, and through a generous policy of commercial credits to foreign governments. Canada stood fully committed to take its part in the building