

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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ORIENTATION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES TOWARDS A WORLD ORDER

An address by Mr. L. B. Pearson, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, at Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y., May 17, 1947.

You all know, I'm sure, that feeling of virtue which comes from accepting an invitation to speak on some subject on which you have long felt you would like to do a solid piece of work; how distant the day seems; how infinite the opportunities appear, to collect, collate and marshall the ideas that have come and gone on that very subject over a period of years. You all know what happens - the sudden recognition that the "deadline" is here - that there is no further time; that the ideas and random notes are either unintelligible, illegible, or seem to have lost the inspiration you once thought they had - and when at last a few bare thoughts have been conscripted, they look for all the world like Falstaff's ragged army.

Well, I can't hope to disown them, so I might as well bring them on parade, knowing well that efforts to be profound - without the opportunity for solid research - tend to degenerate into excursions into the platitudinous.

Before parading my random thoughts, however, I would like to say how much of a pleasure, and indeed relief, it is to leave that dusty arena of the Applied Social Sciences which has been established at Lake Success, for the relative calm of a University like Syracuse; to examine with you one or two of the major political and economic problems which stand in the way of the establishment of a genuine world order.

It is particularly appropriate to be examining these problems in University surroundings, because the University has been in a very real sense the cradle of both the democratic state and of the idea of the world community. Any ex-professor like myself can recognize in the atmosphere of the "universitas magistrorum et scholarium", in the community of teachers and scholars, more of the essence of the universal community than is frequently visible to the harassed diplomat at the United Nations conference table. This is perhaps not to be wondered at, for the itinerant scholar of the middle - and all other - ages has always remained unimpressed by territorial boundaries or indeed other local ground rules. To him it was as natural and inevitable as the seasons, that social science should transcend national prejudices and national prides and work toward the larger order of the world community.

While the search for truth is above and beyond contemporary historical and geographical accidents, those accidents, however, often get in the way. Nor do they have the good sense to stay put for even a few centuries in order that the searcher may have time to observe them properly. Besides, the scholar, until comparatively recently, did not have the modern deluge of passports, identification cards, visas and all that, to draw these geographical and political hazards to his attention.

I am not attempting to paint a nostalgic picture of the past. I am only trying to point out that Universities have been engaged in the business of developing a universal point of view for a longer time than parliaments or congresses or soviets.