

# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

VERNMENT



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## THE PRESENT INTERNATIONAL SCENE

An address by Right Hon. Louis S. St. Laurent, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to Business and Service Clubs, Kitchener, Ontario, March 24, 1948.

It is with some misgiving that as Secretary of State for External Affairs I appear before a Canadian audience in March 1948 to talk about the present international scene. Less than three years ago we signed the Charter of the United Nations; we reaffirmed our faith in the worth and dignity of the individual in the rule of law and justice among nations and in respect for the pledged word. We expressed our conviction that men and nations could, by joint and sustained efforts, live together as good neighbours, be free from fear and want, and enjoy liberty of thought and worship.

And now to many it must seem we are not as close to a lasting peace as we were three years ago. We are all aware of the ominous declarations made during the last few weeks and days by President Truman, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Bevin, Mr. Bidault and others, and we have all been shocked by the tragic and symptomatic events which have recently taken place in Czechoslovakia. These declarations, and these events, have brought home to all of us the increasing threat to our national existence of the rising tide of totalitarian communism. We know that Canada's boundaries against such a threat are not merely geographical; that they must extend beyond her physical frontiers; that they run, in fact, through the hearts of free men everywhere. We know that such a line is being drawn and that on our side of the line are all those in every country who work and fight to preserve the freedom and dignity of individuals against the unbridled impact of totalitarian power and brutal might. We know there can be no neutrality in this conflict, which is as spiritual as it is political and that it has come into being in spite of all that has been done by or through the United Nations.

And yet I shall venture, a little later on, to say some good about the United Nations notwithstanding the fact that, in looking back over the three years since we signed the Charter at San Francisco, it is difficult to see what we could have done, and at what time, to prevent the present critical situation.

There are of course grave defects in the Charter we signed at San Francisco but, as you know, any charter, however imperfect, could be a useful instrument for peace if there were a determination on all sides to keep the peace, just as any covenant or any agreement is a good covenant or a good agreement if the parties to it honestly keep to its spirit, with a willingness to make it effective. But we cannot rely upon a Charter alone, no matter how skilfully drafted - nor can we rely upon an Organization alone, if the adherents to it do not take their responsibilities scrupulously, with an honest determination to make it work.

In all honesty, I do not think that we Canadians have failed in our responsibilities to the United Nations. From the inception of the United Nations we have taken an active and a willing part - and throughout this year