



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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No. 50/11 THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE COLD WAR FOR CANADA

Text of a speech by Mr. L.S. St. Laurent,
Prime Minister of Canada, to the Canadian
Club, in Toronto, on March 27, 1950.

....I have described my topic as "Canada's part in the cold war". Perhaps a better title would be "the implications of the cold war for Canada". Now, the first thing I want to say is that there is some danger in using this phrase, "the cold war".

I am afraid it does give some people the idea that it is just the introductory phase of a shooting war. Actually our purpose -- and the purpose of all free nations in the cold war -- is first to prevent a "hot" war and ultimately to do all we can to end the cold war itself. We have to realize that this will not be an easy task. And we should not expect it to happen in the immediate future, or as the result of some dramatic incident.

We cannot have real and lasting peace until there is some degree of mutual confidence and trust between nations. Events have demonstrated that confidence will depend upon a sincere and radical change in the attitude of Soviet Russia to the rest of the world. Such a change is not going to come overnight, if it comes at all in our lifetime.

Meanwhile the free world has to be prepared to go on probably for years maintaining its security through its own strength. Of course that does not mean exclusively maintaining military strength, though military strength on a scale not contemplated before in peacetime is obviously necessary. That, however, is not what I want to emphasize today.

The point I want to make is that it is just as important for us to show the world that democracy, free democracy, not the kind the Communists talk about, is a better way of life which can provide, in addition to economic and industrial strength and material things in abundance, a faith to inspire all men to live in peace and contentment with one another. If we can maintain this kind of strength, those who oppose us now may, in time, decide it is wiser "to live and let live". They may reach this position by concluding that if they started a war they would be apt to lose it. But ultimate victory will come only when the people behind the iron curtain see that their system as opposed to ours, will not meet either the material or the spiritual needs of mankind.

In the face of the menace of military aggression, the peace-loving nations must have strong military defences. But we must also devote ourselves to the positive task of increasing our economic, political and social strength and

bettering our democracy; not merely to the negative task of defending an established position.

In order to make a positive contribution to the cold war, we must understand what the issues are. Some people think of the cold war only in economic terms as a struggle between private enterprise and state ownership; others put it in political terms as a struggle between democracy and dictatorship; others view it as a philosophical struggle between idealism and materialism; other still as a religious conflict between the concept of a divinely ordained universe and organized atheism.

I believe the cold war is all of these things and more. I would describe it as a struggle between two totally opposed concepts of human society - the one in which the State is the absolute and not-to-be-questioned master of every aspect of the lives of all its subjects; the other in which the State is the servant of the citizens, existing to meet their common political needs, but leaving them free to order other aspects of their lives for themselves.

A useful shorthand description is that the cold war is a struggle between Totalitarianism and Freedom. Now it is not so many years since we were all talking about total war. It seems to me the cold war is a total war of a different kind which demands the use of all our resources: though, fortunately, in the cold war, we can employ those resources more constructively than we could in a shooting war. If the cold war is really a total war, Canada's part is obviously a matter of the greatest concern not only to the government but to every citizen. Indeed, everyone is vitally interested in the ultimate aim which is to achieve security for our free way of life and a genuine assurance of lasting peace for those who really want peace and that, I believe, is the great majority of men and women in every country.

For a while after 1945, we all hoped that international security would be found in the United Nations. But now, we in Canada, and in other free countries, know that the only realistic hope of security in the immediate future lies in a firm combination of nations strong militarily and economically and pledged to act together to resist aggression if any nation should be so unwise as to start aggression.

That is the immediate purpose of the North Atlantic Security Pact. Since the Atlantic Treaty was signed and ratified by Canada, I have had occasion to travel from one end of the country to the other. Everywhere I have found whole-hearted approval of our country's participation in the security organization of the North Atlantic community. The understanding and the unity of Canadians have been gratifying. It is a promising start on what is going to be a long and hard road towards ultimate security.

Of course, we all know that the signing of the treaty was only the first step. All the members of the North Atlantic partnership must do their part to implement the treaty, and to provide the strength, actual and potential, which is its real sanction. For each partner the first problem is to determine how much it should devote to military defence. The decision as to the magnitude and the nature of the defence expenditures required for national security is certainly one of the most difficult the government has to make. We could probably spend the whole of our national income on defence and still not be sure of complete immunity to attack.

And I don't think anyone in Canada dreams of the possibility of arming this country so we could take on a great power single-handed. What we have to do - what all the free countries have to do - is to try to strike the best possible balance between the provision of immediate strength in trained men and arms-in-being; and lasting potential strength, military, industrial and economic. This is a most difficult balance to strike.

I imagine all of you have heard of Dr. Vannevar Bush, the great American scientist who was the organizer of scientific research during the last war and who directed the activities which resulted in the production of the atomic bomb. Dr. Bush recently published a book called "Modern Arms and Free Men" which discusses this problem of achieving our objectives in the cold war in a way which appealed to me very much.

On the specific question of how much of a nation's resources should be spent on defence, Dr. Bush warns us that the cold war is likely to last for a long time and that, so long as there is sufficient strength to withstand an immediate shock, what will be decisive is the capacity to endure and the demonstration of the superiority of our political and social institutions. I was particularly struck by one passage which I should like to repeat to you today. These are Dr. Bush's words:

"There is, however, more than one way of losing the race. We have not gone far in it yet, and we already feel the pinch. The race can be lost, as all long races that depend upon man's endurance can be lost, either by doing too little or by trying to do too much too soon. It will profit us little to have stocks of bombs and planes and then to bring our governmental and industrial systems crashing down about our ears. This is a long, hard race we are embarked upon; we had better settle into harness for the long pull and mark well how we use our resources."

And let me remind you again that our first purpose is to prevent the cold war from becoming a shooting war. On that point, too, I am going to risk another quotation from Dr. Bush. About half way through the book he has this to say about the prospect of preventing a shooting war:

"It need not come if we fully maintain our strength. It need not come if we realistically enough and with enough determination resolve that it shall not. It need not come if we really learn to make our democracy work. It need not come at all, for if the strength of free peoples prevents it for a generation, that same strength can then produce a new sort of world in which great wars will no longer occur. For this consummation we face a task that will test us as we have never been tested before, that will test whether we really mean it when we say that we believe in human dignity and human freedom, whether we can really submerge selfishness and petty motive, and bring our enormous latent power to bear, to make our way of life function with true effectiveness for the good of all."

That is a view to which I think we can all subscribe, and that is precisely why I feel the cold war is also a total war requiring the mobilization -- in a constructive manner -- of all our resources, including our moral resources.

To win the cold war it will not be enough to devote to military defences and the production and development of arms a considerable fraction of our total resources. That may be enough

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to prevent defeat. Preventing defeat is not the same thing as winning a victory. To win, I believe the nations of the free world must demonstrate the superiority of our institutions and our way of life to the continued satisfaction of all our own people. And then we must win over those hundreds of millions in Asia and Africa who now feel indifferent and confused and are attached to neither side in the cold war; and ultimately we must convince those other millions behind the Iron Curtain that Communist Imperialism means slavery and that we stand for freedom and peace.

Our military contribution to ultimate security is important and we are not neglecting it. But I believe that Canada can also make a great contribution to the non-military side of the cold war, and it is of that contribution I want particularly to speak. But first we have to consider the assets our nation has with which to support our contribution. We share with the Americans this happy continent which is still relatively less vulnerable to direct attack than any other developed area of the globe. Then, next to the Americans, we have the greatest per capita developed wealth of any people; and, in addition, even greater undeveloped wealth. Moreover, we have a population with a high average level of enlightenment, of ingenuity and of initiative. -All of this adds up to an industrial and economic potential which, despite our relatively small population, gives us a place in world affairs immediately after the great powers. And that in turn gives Canada a special responsibility to contribute to the economic strength of the free world.

What is just as important, our political and social institutions have proved equal to the greatest strains; our people have shown that they have the vision to see that our national interests and responsibilities extend far beyond the borders of Canada; and they are prepared to assume and to discharge these heavy responsibilities effectively.

Now Canada has developed fast and gone far. Men and women of my age have no difficulty in remembering the days when very few Canadians had any real interest in what happened outside Canada. Spectacular events like the Spanish-American war and the South African war occasionally stirred us; but it never occurred to Canadians before 1914 that they had any responsibility in world affairs - and few of us wanted any responsibility. After 1919, we felt that our great part in the first world war entitled Canada to a voice in world affairs; but as we watched the international scene darken between the wars, many of our people shrank from responsibility and hoped we might escape the consequences of events we could not control. Today I believe most Canadians are convinced they cannot escape the consequences of world events, and they are not trying to shirk their share of responsibility.

One aspect of that responsibility, one contribution we can make to ultimate success in the cold war is to maintain right here in Canada a strong and healthy free community in which the State remains our Servant and does not become our Master; a community in which resources are continually being developed and in which industrial power is an increasing source of potential military strength.

In maintaining a healthy free nation voluntary associations of citizens, like the Canadian Clubs, have an important place. One of the great sources of our strength and vitality is that we do things ourselves without waiting for the government or the State to tell us what to do.

Another source of freedom and vitality in Canada is our Federal system with provincial and municipal governments, in no way under central control and free to initiate activities within the spheres assigned to them by the Constitution. Incidentally, I believe the health and strength of our nation depend just as much upon the way our local institutions discharge their obligations, as upon the way we deal with more general political problems at Ottawa. There are few of our institutions on which the health of our free Society is so dependent as it is upon our educational institutions and particularly on our universities. Education in the totalitarian state is indoctrination and propaganda; the very preservation of free nations depends upon freedom to teach, freedom to learn and freedom to investigate. Happily our constitution as well as our traditions have given us safeguards of educational freedom, and there is no freedom we should cherish more.

It seems to be a historical law that the totalitarian state cannot tolerate any form of religion; the totalitarian state demands religious as well as political allegiance to itself. Religious freedom - the utmost possible freedom for the Churches - is, on the other hand, the very hall-mark of a healthy free nation. Then, too, I am one of the unrepentant who believe that free enterprise is essential to a healthy nation. I think freedom is necessary in order to provide scope for enterprise - but I also think that enterprise - real enterprise, even adventurous enterprise - is necessary to achieve the maximum development of the vast resources of a new country like ours. In advocating freedom of enterprise, I do not mean that governments should not have a large measure of responsibility for promoting vigorous economic activity and for contributing actively to human welfare.

I believe that social security, or social insurance as I prefer to describe it, like ordinary insurance, can be a stimulus and not an impediment to enterprise. I am convinced it is the duty of governments, federal, provincial and municipal, to do everything they can effectively to improve human welfare and to maintain conditions favourable to successful enterprise and thereby to high levels of employment and prosperity. We all want high levels of employment and prosperity but we have always said the bulk of employment should be provided by private enterprise. I do not think it would be wise for any government to kill the geese that we are counting on to lay the golden eggs.

Perhaps you are beginning to think I am getting a long way from Canada's part in the cold war. Well, I am not really. I do not believe Totalitarian Communism ever really hoped to achieve world domination by a direct frontal attack. The Communists profess to believe that sooner or later a bigger depression will engulf the capitalist world which will then collapse of its own weight. That is the day of opportunity they are waiting for. Totalitarian Communism does not rely solely on the armed strength of the countries behind the Iron Curtain; as one writer has put it, the special advantage of Communist imperialism - its war head - lies in the fifth column; and the fifth column is based on local Communist parties and their secret agents in free countries.

This potential fifth column presents every free nation with one of the most difficult and perplexing problems.

The fifth column presents two separate dangers. If a hot war should break out, enemy agents in our midst might be capable of doing crippling damage at the outset. That is why free nations cannot afford to neglect every reasonable precaution to find any secret agents there may be, and to make sure they are rendered harmless. That calls for skilled police activity by experts. Now generally speaking it is desirable to have as much publicity as possible about public affairs; but police action to detect possible enemy agents certainly cannot be helped and can be seriously hampered by publicity campaigns. What is more, we must all take the utmost care to make sure that we avoid introducing into our free communities the methods and attitudes of the police state, which are perhaps the most terrible of all the terrors of totalitarianism.

In the mouths of a certain type of intellectual, Communism is represented as a social faith and it has some appeal to those who are ignorant of the results as distinguished from the promises of Communism. Communism by promising to redress injustice or to end poverty has a considerable capacity to rally its fifth columns in any corner of the world where it has gained a foothold. But I do not believe we need to have any worry of mass support for Communism in Canada as long as this country remains a land of promise and opportunity for all our people whatever their origin or occupation.

That is why I say that the maintenance of enterprise, of prosperity, of a high level of employment and an expanding standard of human welfare are among the most potent weapons in the cold war. Of course, to these material advantages, we must add a vigorous faith in our free institutions. The maintenance of a strong free nation at home is naturally only the foundation of our contribution to the cold war. Canada is a great trading nation. Each individual Canadian depends more on trade than does the individual citizen of any other country. That gives us a special interest in the restoration of the economies of war devastated countries, particularly the United Kingdom and the countries of Western Europe which have always been the best overseas markets for our surplus production.

We Canadians have already made a very great contribution to the cause of European economic recovery, and we are continuing to do so. We are doing it as a matter of enlightened self-interest. Not only do we want to have markets in Britain and Europe; but the greater the economic strength of those countries, the more they will be able to do for their own defence and the greater our military security will become. Of course, the cold war is not confined to Europe and the North Atlantic region. As I said, it is a total war and no region of the world is immune.

At this time the great continent of Asia is feeling the pinch of the cold war; it is also in the throes of one of the greatest upheavals ever seen in history. Hundreds of millions of people have become increasingly conscious of their poverty at the same time as they have become independent.

This would appear to be a fertile ground for Communism and the Communists are doing their utmost to convince the people of Asia that their salvation, both economic and political, lies in the acceptance of Communism as a panacea of their many pressing problems.

Of course leaders like Mr. Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, and the other statesmen who provide over the destinies of those great lands know that if such a panacea were

applied, the frail liberty which they have enjoyed for but a few months would be destroyed and replaced by a much more ruthless form of government than they had experienced under so-called European imperialism.

In the face of the disruptive forces now at work in Asia, we in the western world must endeavour to show that ours is the constructive approach and that we and not Soviet Imperialism stand for economic and social progress. Canada has consistently shown a desire to join with the other free nations to help the peoples of Asia on the road to genuine freedom and progress. There are many ways in which we of the western world, by sharing with them our economic and industrial experience and "know how", can assist them in the establishment of processes and systems whereby the labour of their millions can be made more productive and their standards of living brought closer to our own.

Just listen to this account in the House of Commons given by the Hon. Mr. Mayhew on March 13 of the impression he brought back from his trip to Mysore for the ILO conference, and to Colombo for the Commonwealth meeting of Foreign Ministers and others. This is from Hansard, p. 685 & 686:

"Mr. Harris (Danforth): While the minister is thinking about Colombo and the places at which he was entertained at different times, perhaps he will say a word of encouragement to the natives and the people of Colombo with regard to their standard of living as compared with our own, and indicate that the Canadian people would be ready to help them out.

Mr. Mayhew: I hope that nothing that I have said or will say will in any way be considered as disparaging of these people. Indeed it is the very opposite.... We hear a good many people speak of the magnitude of the task connected with bringing a better standard of living to these splendid and hard-working people.... It must be remembered that India and Ceylon, as well as all of south Asia, are not one-crop countries. They have no difficulty, if they have water, in getting three, four and in some places five crops a year. It must also be remembered that that part of the world is very backward in the matter of tools. In a sense they are the victims of the kind of thing that we are victims of in Canada; they are as much afraid of the modern tool displacing workers as we are afraid of immigration. Both will bring prosperity - in India, the advanced tool, and in Canada, immigration.

Anyone in the United States or Canada who would think of employing a tractor, a large combine or a heavy plow would have in mind something which is not known over there and which would not do the job. The agricultural areas are divided into plots of three, four or five acres. Plots of these sizes are about all one family could cultivate properly if it is to take off three or four crops in the year.

Perhaps I should tell the House, however, what we did see. In watering the land - and what I am about to say is more particularly true of Egypt - they dip the water with buckets which carry it to the top of the bank, at which point it is poured into a sluice to irrigate the land. A treadmill may be used to pump the water. Others use the ancient method of the Archimedean screw In that process a man turns a crank and a small volume of water cores up. A farm pump, with which we are familiar in Canada, would probably irrigate twenty times as much land as the methods they are now using.

It will be seen from what I am saying that the process is neither colossal nor spectacular. On the contrary it could be handled in a simple fashion. These people should be encouraged to see whether the modern equipment we have been using could be used to their advantage. These are new countries with a new lease on life and new leaders. They are driving ahead at a rate which commands the admiration of all and requires very little encouragement."

Finally, there is another and more intangible way in which I believe we Canadians can help - and are helping - to win the cold war. I have tried to stress the importance of strengthening all those institutions which give richness and variety to the life of a free nation in contrast to the drabness and uniformity of the totalitarian state.

Our nation has an added element of diversity because it is based on a partnership of two races and two cultures. Upper and Lower Canada were politically united in 1840. At the beginning it was an unhappy and uncomfortable union, but it was out of first union that the wider union of Confederation came. Today we who live in Ontario and Quebec can look back on more than a century of political partnership between those who speak English and French as their mother tongues. Into that original partnership we have admitted thousands of others from most of the nations of the earth. And I believe that our special historical experience has bred tolerance in our very bones, and has given to Canadians an exceptional capacity to understand and co-operate with other nations.

The whole conception of an Atlantic community is consistent with our Canadian pattern of life because the Atlantic community is a voluntary partnership. It is a joint endeavour of free peoples who are seeking to attain collective security by combining their economic and social, as well as their political and military, strength. It is our hope that the Atlantic community will prove to be even more than an answer to the problem of security and that it may prove to be an answer to the problem of the proper relationship between great nations and their less powerful neighbours. We do not want it to be merely negative and defensive. It should be more than an "anti" proposition. It is our hope that the Atlantic Treaty will promote growing harmony and co-operation among the partner nations.

I have said more than once in other places that lasting peace and harmony between nations can only come about through the development among the nations of the world of the kind of partnership which we have developed between the two great races here in Canada.

It was with that kind of partnership that we have developed Canada as a nation. Today we stand united before a world in need of unity, and the striking thing is that this world faces a problem of racial differences, language differences, cultural differences on a far greater scale but essentially similar to the problem we faced in the early days of our national life.

We stand thus before a world in need of political harmony such as we have achieved, and before a world in need of a kind of partnership similar to ours. I do not think it is too much to hope that our national example, and the attitude of the Canadians who have the responsibility of conducting our relations with other nations, may contribute to the development in the international sphere of the unity of purpose and the spirit of co-operation so essential to the strength and the security of the free world.