



Statements and Speeches

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A MONUMENT MORE ENDURING THAN BRONZE...

A Testimonial Address by the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, President of the Privy Council and Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs, at the Unveiling of a Mural by Charles Gagnon in Memory of the Late Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, Ottawa, June 11, 1975.

We have met in the hall of this building that bears his name -- friends, colleagues, associates -- to pay tribute to an outstanding diplomat, a brilliant Secretary of State for External Affairs, an accomplished party leader and a great Prime Minister of Canada.

The words of Lester B. Pearson inscribed in the mural we shall presently unveil bear testimony to his manifold deeds in these successive offices. During 40 years, Lester B. Pearson served without respite the people of Canada; and during these 40 years his mettle was tempered by the companionship of his wife, Maryon Pearson. "After all," he wrote shortly after his retirement in *Words and Occasions*, "if I had not married Maryon Moodie, I never would have occupied the positions which made authorship of this kind possible."

These positions, as I just recalled, were of increasing elevation; and the achievements of Lester B. Pearson grew in breadth and in depth with them. Perhaps his outstanding performance as Prime Minister of Canada has cast a historical shadow on his diplomatic career and his tenure as Secretary of State for External Affairs, even if the latter consumed fully three-quarters of his public life. In this building, on this occasion, I therefore felt that it would be appropriate to recall the long career of Mike Pearson, the diplomatist.

When I arrived in Ottawa in 1942, Mike Pearson was already a legend. I had very little to do with him personally, however, until I was instructed to join the Canadian delegation to an UNRRA conference in Atlantic City, in the late Forties. My particular chore was to prepare the first draft of Mr. Pearson's speech. My recollection is that some of that first draft did manage to survive...I forget if it was the tenth or the eleventh final redraft. Thus began my training in the painstaking art of international diplomacy!

After his elevation to the Ministry, I saw much more of Mike. I had the honour of accompanying him and Maryon to Moscow in 1955, at the beginning of the East-West thaw. That trip was memorable for many

reasons. I recall his speech at the Canadian Embassy in Moscow. Canada, he said, was a small country -- lots of geography, but not much history or many people; but it occupied a strategic position in the world, stretching between the Soviet Union and the United States and subject to pressure from both sides. Kaganovich was present and interjected: "As far as the Soviet Union is concerned, friendly pressure." To which Mike replied: "The strongest pressure I know is friendly pressure."

Allow me to quote a few more personal recollections from the testimonial address the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Allan MacEachen, had prepared for this occasion:

"My association with Mr. Pearson began when I entered Parliament in 1953. Cartoonists had already made the bow tie his trade-mark as Secretary of State for External Affairs; and I hope you will not take offence, Mr. Prime Minister, if I recall that he was the first 'flower man' to sit in Parliament. For he was also wont to relieve the staidness of his professional uniform by pinning a rose to his lapel. Mike Pearson was already, at that time, the most famous Government front-bencher after Prime Minister St. Laurent; and I was so far on the back bench that hardly a step separated me from the Commons lobby, which he crisscrossed with his characteristic bounce, back from the United Nations to report to Parliament one day, on his way to NATO or some other meeting the next.

"Yet he still had an ear for the speeches of back-benchers; and I admit that I was quite flattered when he commented on one of my first efforts and helped me jump seniority and join that year's Parliamentary delegation to the United Nations. Thus it was Mike Pearson himself who first led me up the diplomatic path.

"But I got to know Mr. Pearson much better after 1958, when he cast away for good his pinstripes -- holding on to his bow tie, mind you -- by assuming the leadership of the Liberal Party and of the Official Opposition. A temporary lapse of my own Parliamentary mandate had left me free to join Mr. Pearson's staff; during the long and difficult years which led to his Prime Ministership in 1963, I therefore witnessed how he adapted the skills developed on the diplomatic bench to a quite different calling -- but one no less political."

I certainly share Allan MacEachen's view that Mike Pearson's success as party leader and Prime Minister derived first and foremost from his uncanny ability to bring a team together and to keep it together, in spite of the long odds and the setbacks the Opposition faced in those years. I am quite sure that this ability was acquired in the corridors of international politics, where he had so dextrously

jostled along a much larger number of players, with interests and convictions much more difficult to reconcile than those then represented in the Official Opposition. Many other facets of the diplomatic trade served him well as a politician. He was a genius at strategy, trained to reconcile principle and expediency, to compromise without compromising. He had learned to recognize quickly tactical errors, to admit to them with a disarming candour and to strike a new course in the midst of manoeuvre. He had acquired extraordinary stamina -- as must all *habitués* of international conferences; so that, after the most harrowing experience, he would bounce back at the office the following morning, fit and fresh for the next battle. He had not become jaded by the apparent, but only apparent, stalemate of so many international negotiations; he believed in the power of ideas, he believed that an impasse could more often be overcome by seasoned imagination than by stubborn obfuscation.

But I am digressing. I make no apology for it, since it is almost impossible to distinguish Lester B. Pearson's accomplishments as Prime Minister from what we owe to him as diplomat and Secretary of State for External Affairs. I know better than most that the foreign policy of a government is a collective endeavour; yet, I can state without hesitation that Lester B. Pearson was the architect of Canada's multilateral diplomacy. His most brilliant insights have unquestionably been those that inserted in a single perspective the destinies of all men living on this planet, which embraced in a single movement the whole international community. How fitting that the mural we shall presently unveil should remind us that:

"Sooner and better than his contemporaries he had come to understand that the world, for all of its diversity was one...that no nation, even the most powerful, could escape a common creaturehood and a common peril."

This global vision was developed quite early in his career. It pervades, for example, the Armstrong Lectures delivered in 1942, in which he stated quite bluntly his conviction that "no country can any longer expect peace and security by basing its policy on isolation or the absence of formal international obligations". The same global vision inspired his leadership of the permanent Canadian delegation at the founding conference of the United Nations in 1945. It led him to leave the relative shelter of officialdom to assume the political leadership of our diplomacy. It fortified him during his tenure as President of the United Nations General Assembly in 1952, and no doubt inspired the leading role he played in the resolution of the 1956 Suez crisis, a role which earned him the Nobel Peace Prize.

In retrospect, one cannot help but observe that there is some historical peculiarity in the evolution of Canada's foreign policy. During those years, shortly after the Dominion Government, as it was then called, had claimed its external powers from the Westminster Parliament, Canada literally erupted upon the international scene. What is peculiar, in my opinion, is that Canada was one of the rare countries to develop a world view more or less *in abstracto*, on the basis of principle rather than interest -- that is, before it had fully developed its bilateral diplomacy and, indeed, before it had identified precisely its national interests in international affairs. No doubt the historical context explains to a large extent this somewhat unusual development:

the triangular relations with London and Washington, which structured our external involvements prior to the Second World War;

the depth of our commitment to the second generation of international organizations, nascent after the end of hostilities;

the Cold War, which further emphasized our multilateral commitments;

the temporary paling on the world scene of Europe and Japan, both absorbed by the tasks of postwar reconstruction;

the struggle for independence then beginning in Asia and Africa, which had to come to pass before a non-colonial power like Canada could develop bilateral relations with these emergent societies.

But I am convinced that Canada's multilateral diplomacy would not have developed so swiftly and ranged so far if it had not been for the vision of Lester B. Pearson.

"La vraie générosité envers l'avenir consiste à tout donner au présent" -- my illustrious predecessor was fond of these words by Albert Camus, also reproduced in the mural. Because circumstance as well as conviction lead him to stress, during his diplomatic career, the more universal dimensions of our foreign policy, Lester B. Pearson has been accused of having neglected some of Canada's national interests. Such accusations are unfair, for it was not so much Canadian nationalism as all nationalisms he sought to restrain, for reasons the recent history of humanity amply justify.

If he erred in this respect, it must be recognized that his error

was attributable to generosity and optimism. He may have underestimated, in the immediate postwar period, the resilience of national states and their reluctance to divest themselves of some of the attributes of sovereignty to strengthen the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies. But I am glad it was in that direction rather than in the opposite one that he erred, for the world would be unquestionably more secure and more prosperous today if his optimism had been justified.

Circumstances change. Succeeding Canadian Governments have found it necessary to redeploy the country's diplomatic resources and to place a new emphasis on the development of bilateral relations. But a careful reading of Lester B. Pearson's policy statements in the 1940s and 1950s will show that most of the bilateral initiatives launched in recent years by the Canadian Government are there, in germinal state: the gradual readjustment of our relationship with the United States in his controversial 1951 statement on Canada/United States relations (it seems that no Secretary of State for External Affairs can deal with this subject without being controversial); or in our attempts to strengthen Canada's links with Europe; in his warm endorsement of the movement toward European unity in 1956; or in our *rapprochement* with the Soviet Union and Asian powers, such as Japan and China. All these recent bilateral initiatives, in my view, will be the more beneficial to Canada because they have been undertaken within the multilateral diplomatic framework built by Lester B. Pearson.

I have chosen to emphasize today the elements of continuity between the foreign policy of the late Mike Pearson and that of the present Government because I am convinced, like the present Secretary of State for External Affairs, that in this post-Pearson era, characterized by great changes in the international environment, Canadian diplomacy must continue to be based on Pearsonian principles. I can propose no better motto to this Department than Lester B. Pearson's challenge to the international community at the San Francisco Conference:

"The struggle for victory over war is even harder than the struggle for victory in war. It will be a slow, tough process. There must be superb organization. There must be brilliant improvisation. At times caution; at other times, a willingness to run great risks for great objectives. At all times, a refusal to permit temporary reverses to shake our belief in ultimate victory. Above all, there must be no false optimism about the possibility of an early victory. There is no easy and upholstered way from the foxhole to the millenium."

S/C