

GOVERNMENT  
  
OF CANADA

## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
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### THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY

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Text of a broadcast on the North Atlantic Treaty delivered by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, over the Trans-Canada Network of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation at 8.45 P.M. on March 18, 1949.

Tonight in your newspapers you will have seen the text of the proposed North Atlantic Treaty. It is a short and simple document. It has a brief preamble, and fourteen short clauses. It is, however, a document of great importance. When it has been signed and ratified, the peoples of the free and democratic states of the North Atlantic community will have promised each other to work together in peace and to stand together in danger.

The text may not have contained many surprises for you. Though you are seeing it now for the first time, the general principles upon which it is based have been freely discussed in public now for many months. Members of the Government, the press, and the public generally, have considered this proposal for a treaty from many angles. They know the gripping sense of danger which has led the western nations to negotiate it. They know also the methods which are being considered to meet this danger. The actual terms of the proposed Treaty do no more than put in precise language the agreement for collective action which we have been led to expect.

This Treaty is still only a proposal. The text has been laid on the table in Parliament. Sometime within the next few days and before the Treaty is signed your representatives in Parliament will be given an opportunity to express their views about it. If it is approved -- and I hope it will be unanimously approved -- there will then be a conference in Washington early in April at which the Treaty will be signed. After signature, it must be ratified. The Canadian Government will not ratify this Treaty until Parliament has again been consulted. The right of the Canadian people to express through Parliament their view of this important development in our foreign policy is therefore fully recognised and fully protected.

It is now about nine months since representatives of a group of North Atlantic countries first met to prepare a North Atlantic Treaty. At that time the work of rebuilding the western world, which had been successfully started, was in danger of being destroyed by the forces of subversive communism supported by the mass and might of militaristic expansionist Russia. In Canada we realised that the lands of Western Europe might be shut off from us by a sudden act of aggression. These lands are an important part of the free world to which we belong. They have nurtured our culture and buttressed our freedom. They have been the source of many of our supplies of material goods. They have been the principal market for many of our exports. Most important of all, we have learned from hard experience that

our national safety is closely bound up with theirs.

For these reasons Canada sent its representatives to the discussions which were taking place in Washington. In these meetings the terms of an agreement were worked out by which the free governments of the western world would work together to protect their common stake in peace and freedom. The governments which have taken part in these discussions believe that by these means they can make the cost of aggression so high for any possible disturber of the peace that he will not venture on any act of aggression. They believe they can do even more than this. They have faith that by co-operating amongst themselves they can help build a stable, prosperous, peaceful world. This is no mere negative proposal for a defence alliance. It is meant to be the beginning of a positive development in co-operation -- economic, social, cultural -- amongst the free nations of the Atlantic community.

What are the States that will be asked to sign this Treaty? Let me name them for you: Belgium, Denmark, Canada, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the United States. These twelve states which border on the North Atlantic or which are close to it, occupy a large area. They command large resources, and their industries are well developed. They are inhabited by many millions of people, and these people are generally self reliant and independent in spirit. Their association is a natural one geographically. It is natural also because of the common heritage they have -- in political and in social organization; in culture and in religion. They can help one another in many ways. Together they can restore the western world. Together they can frustrate the Soviet veto on peace. Together -- under the Treaty -- they can begin the building of the North Atlantic community, based on a common tradition of liberty and democracy.

What will Canada be expected to do if we sign the Treaty? The best answer to this question is to be found in the text itself. Article 5 contains the most important commitment. The States which sign this Treaty agree that "...an armed attack against one or more of them shall be considered an armed attack against them all". They also agree that if any one of them is attacked, each will "assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area". If such an attack occurs -- and with this Treaty that dread contingency is far less likely to occur -- no one knows what type of action will be necessary to bring the aggressor to terms. Whatever this action is, we agree to play our proper part in it in co-operation with the other members of the group.

This by no means implies that we as a nation, will be giving a blank cheque to others who will tell us what to do. Not at all. On the Council which it is proposed to set up under the Treaty, we shall have a voice in making any plans which the group will jointly recommend to their governments. If there is an emergency, we shall have far more influence than we have ever had before in determining how this emergency shall be met. If there is no emergency, we shall through this proposed council, be able to take part in the very significant measure of economic and social co-operation which is provided for under Article 2 of the Treaty.

How does this Treaty protect Canada? We have learned in two tragic and costly world wars that we cannot escape the consequences when some great act of aggression takes place. We do not forget the frightening time during the last war, when France had been overrun and the German armies stood at the Channel. The Nazi was looking at the white cliffs of Dover -- and beyond the Atlantic waters. Our very national existence in Canada was at stake. In the Spring of 1940 there were very few people in Canada, or even in the United States, who did not dread the result for us if the last outposts of freedom fell in Western Europe. Because our safety is linked with that of our neighbours, we know that the best way to keep the invader away from our shores and the hostile bomber out of our skies is to make sure that, if aggression occurs, it is stopped where it begins. We know also that to avoid war we must build peace -- actively, by working constantly with our neighbours in the Atlantic community for the conditions in which peace will exist.

What about the United Nations? Nothing in this proposed Treaty is in any conflict with the United Nations. Our loyalty to that organization is unchanged. Our willingness to carry out our obligations under its Charter continues. Our hope that through the agency of the United Nations we shall yet achieve universal collective security remains. We know, however, that the United Nations cannot at the present time guarantee our security. It would be madness to indulge in self-delusion and to pretend it does. We must therefore take such interim measures as we think necessary, with like minded peace-loving states, to gain the security the United Nations cannot now offer. But the Treaty specifically states that the obligations, under the Charter of the United Nations, of all those who sign the Atlantic Pact remain untouched. It is also provided that action against an aggressor under Article 5 shall cease once the Security Council of the United Nations has taken effective action to restore peace. The Charter itself specifically takes account of the fact that arrangements such as the North Atlantic Pact may be made by some member states.

The proposed North Atlantic Pact does not undercut or sidetrack the United Nations. In fact, we believe that by contributing to the stability and economic recovery of our part of the world, the members of this group of states strengthen the United Nations. Certainly we shall try to bring about that result.

There are some hopeful signs on the horizon today. The upheavals of a war, six years long and as wide as the whole circumference of the globe, left terrible problems and dangers. But the world is slowly recovering. This recovery can be wiped out, suddenly and tragically, by some rash act of aggression. The North Atlantic Treaty will both help and protect our recovery. It will help it by providing new channels for co-operation. It will protect it by demonstrating to any possible aggressor the determination of the free peoples to resist.

For the people of the North Atlantic community, the Treaty is a new beginning. It carries the promise of greater security and fuller co-operation amongst the nations. It spans an ocean to join two continents. It gives the many millions of people who live in this area a chance to develop together the principles and practices of international co-operation, under rules of law and conduct that are familiar to them. It holds out the hope of freedom, order and progress in a peaceful world.

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