



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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Notes from the Remarks of Prime Minister the Right Honourable L.B. Pearson at the Opening of the Meeting of Military Experts to Consider the Technical Aspects of United Nations Peace-Keeping Operations, Ottawa, November 2, 1964.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen:

I am pleased to welcome you to Ottawa on behalf of the Government of Canada. I am doubly pleased because your meeting to consider the important aspects of United Nations peace-keeping operations is the result of a proposal which I put forward to the United Nations General Assembly last year. At that time, speaking for the Canadian Government, I said:

"We would be happy to share our experience with others who have participated with us in UN peace-keeping operations in the past, as well as with those who might wish to do so in the future.

"To this end, we propose that there should be an examination by interested governments of the problems and techniques of peace-keeping operations."

When I made this proposal I hoped that such an examination might lead to closer co-ordination of stand-by forces for UN service, as well as to better mutual understanding of the techniques of peace keeping. As long ago as 1957, it was my view that we should "pool our experience and our resources so that the next time we, the governments and peoples whom the United Nations represents, will be ready and prepared to act". This is still my view.

I realize, nevertheless, that in these matters we must advance with all deliberate speed. Dag Hammarskjold once put it in these terms:

"World organization is still a new adventure in human history. It needs perfecting in the crucible of experience and there is no substitute for time in that respect."

It is this "crucible of experience" which brings you together today. Your purpose is to exchange views on the basis of common experience in peace keeping, on the vital technical and military aspects of UN operations and, as a result, to put yourselves in a better position to respond to possible future demands for action under the blue flag of the United Nations.

Needless to say, no government commits itself to respond to such possible future demands by the United Nations just because it has participated in this meeting. That is a decision for governments to make in the light of all the circumstances at the time. But a government which does so respond will have benefited, I know, from the presence of its representatives in Ottawa this week. So, too, will the United Nations have benefited, and I am glad to note, in this respect, the presence here today of a distinguished representative of the Secretary-General.

Too often, in the past, we have been unprepared to meet peace-keeping emergencies. Nor is it reasonable to believe that such emergencies will not happen again - perhaps without warning. The United Nations itself may be prevented by circumstances from taking action to prepare for such emergencies. We all know the difficulties that lie in the way of such United Nations action. But member governments can, indeed must, do a great deal on their own initiative. And who is more aware of this need than those of us who have made major contributions to peace keeping in the past, or who have made it clear we are prepared to be of assistance in the future?

May I say in conclusion that Canadians take pride in the fact of your meeting here. Canadians have participated in every United Nations peace-keeping operation since 1948. Successive Canadian Governments have always sought to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to preserve the peace. I myself have been privileged to be associated with these efforts for many years.

We do not expect miracles. As Secretary-General U Thant pointed out in his address to the Canadian Parliament on May 26 last, what we can expect is "a sound and gradual development of thought and action at the national and international levels, if, in this matter of peace keeping, we are to profit from the lessons of the past and plan and act for a more stable and happier future". But that is also the least we should expect. I am confident that the meeting which begins today will carry us forward yet a little closer towards that goal.

S/C