



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

An address by Mr. L. B. Pearson,
at the Directors' International Day
Luncheon, Canadian National
Exhibition, Toronto, September 2, 1947.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,
Gentlemen:

In the first place, Mr. Chairman, may I thank you for your introduction. It was neat, but thank goodness it was not gaudy. May I also express to you, Mr. Chairman, my pleasure at the invitation to appear here today; a pleasure not in the prospect of this speech but in the prospect of seeing the Exhibition after the speech. From about the age of six until sixteen or seventeen, I never missed a "Childrens Day" at the Ex. I arrived early in the morning with my dollar and left late in the evening with nothing. In those days, a dollar went a little further than it does today. Also, in those earlier days, my enjoyment of the day was not spoilt by the looming shadow of a speech to be made. However, in fifteen or twenty minutes, you will be glad to know, I will get that shadow out of the way and I will then be able to enjoy myself thoroughly.

I have been wondering, the last day or two, what I ought to speak about. Normally, when I am asked to address a distinguished audience, I am cautious enough to write out a speech so that I will not get myself, or even possibly the Government, for whom I work as a Civil Servant, into trouble. Unfortunately, the last week I have been on a holiday, and a holiday is no time in which to write a speech. So I am just going to burden you with a few random, and I am afraid, rather disconnected remarks.

The Chairman has reminded you and me that I am a son of the manse. I am not only a son of the parsonage, which is another kind of manse, but I am also a grandson of the parsonage. I remember my grandfather very well indeed. He was a great preacher. But at times, even he wondered what he was going to preach about. When he got into those difficulties, no sermon prepared, my grandmother always used to say to him "Give them that sermon on Heaven". Well, when I was wondering yesterday what I should say, my family, equally helpful, said "Give them that sermon on the United Nations". Not that there is necessarily any similarity at the moment, between Heaven and the United Nations. However, even if the United Nations were not a subject about which I am accustomed to speak, it would, for one reason at least, be a good one for me. I am a Civil Servant, and of course I shouldn't talk about politically controversial subjects. The United Nations, in Canada, is not such a subject. But, apart from that, it would seem to me to be quite appropriate to talk about the United Nations and international co-operation on this particular day at the Exhibition, International Day.

International co-operation is, I think, today more important than it has ever been before. In this age of guided atoms and guided missiles, guided bacteria and, even worse, guided hatreds, it is important, on this or indeed any other day, for us to think hard about international affairs. No people have more cause for such thought than Canadians. We have long since lost the illusion of political security in remoteness. We have also long since lost the idea that we could have prosperity without international economic forces working in our favour. Today, particularly, when scientific developments have proceeded, either downwards or upwards, to the point where we know that forces which we don't control will blow our world to pieces, we should think deeply about where that world is going, and where the nations in the world are going with it. We hear a lot, and we read a lot, about one world. It is true that there is one world in a physical sense, but there is certainly not even an approach to one world in a moral or political or even an economic sense.

We are all together in the physical sense, but in hardly any other sense. Being together in a physical sense, alone, however, doesn't necessarily mean international friendship. Rubbing shoulders sometimes brings about soreness as well as sentiment, and propinquity doesn't always mean peace, as any family man knows. However, one world, physically, does mean that our international contacts are more urgent, more immediately urgent, and more complicated than they have ever been before.

The machinery for conducting these contacts, for carrying on international relations in this one physical world, is diplomacy. In the old days, and I don't mean so very far back when I say "old days", diplomacy was carried on sedately through foreign offices and diplomatic missions abroad. I would have liked to have been a diplomat in those days. It was a genteel, pleasant, rather glamorous profession. Foreign Ministers dipped their quill pens into inkwells, and wrote despatches, which they sanded and sent off by packet, and which reached their Ambassadors three months later, when the problem about which they dealt had disappeared. The Ambassadors then wrote back. Their reply reached headquarters in due course, and the world went on. That is not the way it's done now, I am afraid. A telegram reaches your desk two or three minutes after it was sent, and demands a reply two or three minutes after it has reached you. Diplomacy is now not only big business, but high pressure business.

However, in recent years, this machinery of international intercourse through diplomats has been supplemented by the conduct of international relations through international conferences; if you like to call it that, multilateral diplomacy. This has, I think, become the important characteristic in the conduct of international relations in the last twenty or twenty-five years; diplomacy through conference. Before I left Ottawa, I was looking up the possible requirements of the Department of External Affairs for delegates, advisers and experts for forthcoming international meetings. I was somewhat surprised, and a little discouraged, to discover that, from July the 1st until the present, there had been held 60 international conferences, in places so far removed as Lake Success, Liberia, Toronto (where there was an International Meteorological Conference), Geneva, Shanghai and Canberra. I also discovered that those international meetings were dealing with everything from the peace and future of the world in the Security Council and the Atomic Commission, to the revision of the list of the causes of death and morbidity.

It is one thing to have all this United Nations machinery. It is another thing to make it work. How is it doing? The machinery should, I think, be divided into two categories. We have those United Nations agencies which are dealing with specialist technical problems. And

we have the United Nations Organization, itself, which consists principally of the Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, and which deals with the fundamental and immediate questions of war and peace.

So far as the specialist agencies are concerned, I would suggest that the United Nations machinery is working well. There are seven or eight of these agencies, and they are functioning, I think, on the whole pretty effectively. The reasons for their comparative success are not hard to find. They are technical bodies, dealing with technical concrete problems, through technicians. They have not, for the most part, any executive power, as they merely make recommendations to governments. It is, of course, much easier to make a recommendation that has no binding force to a government than to accept a resolution which involves automatic action. Furthermore, none of these technical bodies grants, in its constitution, the right of veto to any single power. In the organizations dealing with the fields of food and agriculture, finance and aviation, for instance, there is no one power or no group of powers that can legally prevent action recommended by a substantial majority. That leads me to another reason for the comparative success of these technical organizations. Not all states are represented in them. That seems to be a rather discouraging idea, but it is the truth. The very lack of universality in some of the organizations means that they are more likely to include only those states which are determined to see that they work. For instance, the Soviet Union is not a member of the United Nations organizations for food and agriculture, for finance and banking, for aviation. But the absence of the Soviet Union, which is to be greatly deplored on political grounds and which is not the fault of the other countries, has not prevented the functioning of those organizations. Indeed a cynic might say it has assisted in this regard.

Important though these technical agencies may be, however, the United Nations stands or falls on the success or failure of its Assembly and Security Council. The specialist agencies contribute to the welfare of the common man. They contribute, I hope, to his progress and prosperity. But you will never get freedom from want in a world where you have not got freedom from war or the fear of war. That's the job of the United Nations Organization itself, to banish war and the fear of war from the world.

Well, when you start looking at the results of the United Nations in this field, it's difficult to be very cheerful. It is only a little over two years ago that the United Nations was born at San Francisco. Those of us who were there at that time had high hopes that it might succeed where the League of Nations had failed. It is of interest and value, to look back and see what has happened during these two years. Most of our high hopes have been dashed. Possibly they were too high. After all, we met at San Francisco at the end of war on the eve of victory. We worked in the elation of that victory and under the shadow of desolation and destruction of war which accompanied it. War and victory always give us a new opportunity and a new urge to work out our international problems. Then the feeling of hope and horror begins to wear away; of determination to convert complete victory into sure peace. We drift back into the bad old normal state of things; national prejudices, national fears, national suspicions. International affairs become more difficult to conduct; international relations less co-operative. So it is now. Our hopes may have been too high two years ago. If they were, they are not too high now.

On the credit side, you can say that the United Nations is still a going concern. It's also only fair to remember that the United Nations was faced, at the new beginning of its career, with some of the toughest problems that any international agency has ever had to face. Almost before it had a chance to get established, before the members had a

chance to get to know each other, before the nations had a chance to get into the habit of co-operation through the United Nations, hard, bitter problems were thrown right at it. Though these problems may not have been solved, they have not yet killed the Organization, as they might well have done. Also, on the credit side, grievances and disputes have been dragged out into the open. That is to the good. The United Nations has become a forum for discussion. Any nation can bring any subject before it at any time. It has become the custodian and the prodder of the conscience of man. All that is to the good.

On the debit side, and we are a little more conscious of the debit side at the moment, there has been little evidence that the work of the United Nations is based on an international approach to international problems. There have been, on the contrary, many signs that certain members of the United Nations use it to promote selfish national policies, to stir up selfish national prides, to foment class and race prejudices, to trouble the waters so that they could be fished in; to use the United Nations as a platform for propaganda rather than a platform for progress. Both small and great countries have been guilty of this false approach to international co-operation. Some of the small members of the United Nations have taken advantage of their legal equality in that body unfairly to attack larger countries; to exploit grievances, not always with a view to getting those grievances settled peaceably, but to getting them settled advantageously to themselves. Small countries are not always right just because they are small, nor are all non-Anglo-Saxon countries always virtuous and right just because they are not Anglo-Saxon. There has been a tendency in recent months for certain smaller countries to exploit the sympathy felt for small countries and to adopt selfish and mischievous policies at both the Assembly and the Security Council.

But this is not the greatest menace. The greatest danger to the future of the United Nations, a menace which will kill it if it is not brought under control, is the irresponsible use of the veto power in the Security Council. I realize that I am on dangerous ground when I talk about this. The veto power itself is not necessarily to be condemned. It was argued at San Francisco, and there was a good deal of force behind the argument, that, as long as you have an international organization where every state has one vote and no state has more than one vote, where the smallest - Luxembourg - is on the same basis as the most powerful - the United States; where you must observe the strict legal equality of all sovereign states, you cannot expect Great Powers who have to bear the main responsibility for peace and war, to put the destiny of the world in the hands of a mathematical result of 29 against 27. It can be argued they should have greater voting power, just as they have more power and more responsibility in carrying out the decisions resulting from votes. However, though the veto itself may be right or it may be wrong, the way the veto has been used in the last few years in the Security Council has, to my way of thinking, been but irresponsible and indefensible. I remember that at San Francisco we spent hours and hours and hours arguing against the veto. Canadians were on the side of the angels in this argument. We thought that possibly two-thirds majority would be enough to protect the legitimate special interests of the Great Powers. However, we had to give in, because we could not have been at that time any agreement for a United Nations on the basis of the veto. But, and this is sometimes forgotten, before the veto was accepted by the Conference, the permanent members of the Council who were given this privilege gave a solemn pledge that they would exercise it with responsibility and with restraint; that they would not use it in small issues and in procedural matters but only in vital questions; with a due sense of their responsibility and with a due recognition of the special privilege that they had in possessing it. That promise certainly has not been observed by those powers, or at least one of those powers, which possess this privilege. Take, for instance, the use of the veto in respect of election to the United Nations. Only a few weeks ago, the U.S.S.R. vetoed the election of a country like Ireland. Well, if there is any peace-loving country in

world, I should think Ireland has some claim to that title after the experiences of the last ten years. But the Irish application for membership was rejected, not on legitimate grounds but because the U.S.S.R. did not have diplomatic representation in Dublin. This might well be considered as an irresponsible use of the veto, almost to the point of frivolity.

What should we do to improve this situation? We can try to do three or four things. We can amend the Charter. Or rather, we can't amend the Charter, because the Big Powers have a veto on amendment, and any amendment has to be passed by all of them. We could agree on certain conventional rules and regulations for the exercise of the use of the veto, and get the Great Powers to accept those rules. This also will be difficult. If forced, we might make special security arrangements within the United Nations, inviting all those member states to participate in them who are willing to build up an agency within the Organization which would have the power which the whole Organization does not possess under the Charter. The Inter-American Pact, which was signed recently in Brazil, is an example of a special arrangement within the United Nations. There is no particular reason why that idea should not be extended to other countries in the United Nations, if they so desire and if there is no alternative. If it is desired to work out a special arrangement for collective security to include those democratic and freedom-loving states who are willing to give up certain sovereign rights in the interests of peace and safety, why shouldn't it be done? Especially as any arrangement of this kind would have to be consistent with the Charter of the United Nations. Such a development would meet the determination of certain countries now in the United Nations to get real collective security without breaking up the United Nations itself.

A final choice, one of last resort and not one that anyone desires, would be to scrap the present United Nations in favour of an entirely new organization, with power which the present organization has not, to preserve the peace. Every effort should be made to include in our international organization all states. If, however, this cannot be done because some states demand impossible conditions, such as the unrestricted and irresponsible right of veto, then the nations of the world will be faced with the decision, whether or not to sacrifice universality for effectiveness; whether to have a universal organization without power for peace, or progress, though power for mischief, or to have a really effective United Nations, even if that means dropping from that organization those countries who are not willing to accept essential obligations of membership. I repeat that that is a decision which, if the United Nations continues to develop as it has done within the last year, may some day have to be made. But I would repeat again, and repeat with emphasis, that it is a decision of last resort, because if we ever reach the situation, where we have a partial United Nations, with important countries on the outside, then we are indeed faced with two worlds. The only hope for peace, in this situation, would be the realization that the consequences of victory or defeat would be so disastrous, so catastrophic, that those two worlds would maintain an uneasy equilibrium rather than provoke a final, fatal clash.

No one who has any sanity left desires such a division as this. If it occurred, however, it might be used as a means to an end; the end of achieving again that universal peace organization which we must always seek. If, for instance, we were driven

to form this new organization with real power to prevent aggression and protect the peace, and if we could demonstrate that such power would never be used for any other purpose, then by our example and its effectiveness we might eventually draw into it those countries which have remained suspiciously outside. And so finally we might achieve that one cooperating world for which our men have died on battlefields far away and for which we must live and work today.

(27-9-47)