

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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A broadcast delivered by Mr. L.S.
St. Laurent, at Ottawa, on the occasion of
Remembrance Day, November 11, 1948.

Today is Remembrance Day. Remembrance Day belongs to the whole nation - indeed, to the whole free world. This is not a day on which I would want to make a speech in support of a political party.

This Eleventh Day of November is consecrated to the memory of the men and women who in two Great Wars gave their lives to assure peace to men of goodwill. We have today paid tribute to their sacrifice and given expression to our deep and abiding sympathy for their families. The peace for which they died has not yet been assured. That is not to say their sacrifice has been in vain. Those who died for us have given the world a greater vision of international solidarity and of mutual aid.

You all remember that even before the end of the last war, the United Nations met together at San Francisco to establish an organization which we all hoped would be capable of keeping the peace between nations. All the nations, large and small, which took part in that historic Conference apparently wished to perpetuate the spirit of brotherhood which had united them during the war. At that time all the nations seemed, on the surface at least, to be prepared to co-operate sincerely and actively to maintain international security and to promote the progress of civilization.

That was the spirit in which Canada signed the Charter at San Francisco. We are proud to be able to say today that our country has always respected both the letter and the spirit of this great international instrument. The external policy of Canada is based on the principles of the San Francisco Charter. We are resolved to do anything we can to defend the ideals and the purposes expressed in the Charter.

The United Nations has achieved a good deal, mainly in the economic and social fields. But we have to admit that it has not succeeded in banishing the threat of a third world war. In spite of the patience and tolerance of those nations which are genuinely democratic, one of the great powers has through ill-will and constant obstruction prevented the establishment of international security and international co-operation. War, however, is not inevitable. But anyone who considers war an impossibility must be lacking in the most elementary realism.

I am one of those who still dares to hope that Providence will spare our generation and many generations to follow, the scourge of another world war. But we should never forget the wisdom of the old saying: Heaven helps those who help themselves.

In the face of this growing insecurity those nations which really wish to keep peace and to safeguard their freedom are obliged to combine their strength to face the menace of totalitarian and imperialistic Communism. That does not mean that those nations have lost hope in the ultimate triumph of the universal principles of the United Nations Charter.

It does mean that so long as this ideal is not realized, they see the necessity of providing for their own security by means of regional pacts. The Charter itself provides for the establishment of such pacts.

You all know that, several months ago, Great Britain, France, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg, signed the Treaty of Brussels. The purpose of this Treaty was to assure the closest co-operation between these members of the Western Union - co-operation which is to be political and economic as well as military. All the nations which signed the Brussels Pact were weakened by the last war. By themselves alone these European nations are not able to ensure the maintenance of peace. For that matter, the United States and Canada alone are not able to do so either. The very least that is necessary is that the nations of the Western Union and of North America shall join together in an effective system of collective security.

For several months, representatives of Canada, the United States and the nations which signed the Brussels Treaty have been discussing the basis of a North Atlantic Regional Security Pact. As a result of these discussions, we are now ready to begin the actual negotiation of such a Treaty and I sincerely hope these negotiations will be successful. When a Treaty is concluded it will be for our Parliament to decide whether Canada is to accept it or to reject it. Everyone, I believe, will agree that our geographical situation, our historic ties, our material well-being, and, above all, our national security, make it imperative for Canada to take an appropriate place in this Atlantic community.

The establishment of international peace and security is the greatest problem we face today. It is Canada's first concern in world affairs. For my part, I believe that the most certain and the most practical approach to security for us is the achievement, as soon as possible, of an alliance of the North Atlantic nations. It is not enough to have right on our side; it is just as important to have the strength to defend the right. The only way to achieve that strength is for us and the other North Atlantic nations to combine our resources. We know only too well where isolationism leads. The last war proved conclusively that isolationism is no guarantee of security. True, one or two small countries were able to maintain their neutrality and yet survive, but we know that was only because of the Allied victory. If the other free nations had not won the war, the few neutral states would soon have come under the Nazi yoke. The choice we face today is a choice between isolationism with its certain weakness, and the hope, through collective action, of preventing another war. I consider it is my duty to make the utmost effort, both within Canada and in our negotiations with the other governments concerned, to have a system of collective security firmly established. We do not want a third world war. Let us all do everything we can to prevent it.

As you know, I have just returned from London where I took Mr. King's place at the meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers. I am happy to be able to say that all the nations of the Commonwealth found themselves in agreement on a great number of questions of common interest. In particular, the nations of the Commonwealth were all agreed on their combined support for the United Nations. They all hope that one day all the nations of the world will reach an understanding with one another and will come to work together to assure all men, not only peace and security,

but also the greatest possible measure of well-being and prosperity.

It is enough, however, to glance at a map of the world to convince oneself that in meeting the menace of totalitarian Communism, the British Commonwealth by itself does not constitute a system of collective security. The Commonwealth countries must obviously combine with other neighbouring countries if there is to be any real security. Great Britain recognized this truth when she became a member of the Western Union. I have said that the British Commonwealth of Nations does not constitute by itself a system of collective security. The same can be said of Western Union, left to itself. The United States and Canada cannot alone assure the maintenance of international peace, which is so necessary to their own security. Anything less than a North Atlantic Pact would give us no real hope of maintaining a preponderance of material and moral strength on the side of peace. And it is only if we can maintain an overwhelming preponderance on the side of peace, that we can maintain the peace.

We must get clearly into our minds the fact that a Security Treaty will not be fully effective if it is nothing more than a military alliance. In order to create and maintain an overwhelming preponderance, we must have on our side not only military strength but also economic strength and moral strength.

The economic reconstruction of Western Europe is thus an essential condition of our own Canadian security. In helping to reconstruct Western Europe, we have acted in our own best interests.

How can we add to the moral strength on our side? We can do it, I suggest, if the North Atlantic Alliance is the outward and visible sign of a new inward and spiritual unity of purpose in the free world. The alliance must be a sign that the North Atlantic nations are bound together not merely by their common opposition to totalitarian Communism but also by a common belief in the values and virtues of our Western civilization, and by a determination to work for the promotion of mutual welfare and the preservation of peace.

If a third world war should break out, Canada could not be neutral. We are situated right between two great powers, and whether we liked it or not, another world war would be fought at our very gates. It would moreover, be a conflict not merely between two great powers, but between an atheistic communist world and our democratic Christian civilization.

It is no secret for anyone that the leaders of the Soviet Union aspire to world domination. It is equally clear that they count as much on the weaknesses of the free nations as they do on their own armed strength. By demonstrating to the Soviet Union that the free nations of the world are really taking the measures necessary to defend themselves and to ensure respect for the principles of the Charter, the free nations may well convince the Soviets that it would be impossible for them to win a war if they started one. Now no one is likely to start a war with the prospect of losing it.

What I want particularly to emphasize at this point is that we should build up our strength not for the purpose of waging war, but for the purpose of preventing war. We want to avoid a repetition of the tragedy of a totalitarian power conquering the nations of Europe one by one. It must not become necessary to liberate the nations of Europe a second time. The sufferings of the occupied countries, and the losses of the armies of liberation might well, the next time, be much greater than they were in the last war. The liberation itself would be much more difficult, would take much longer, and would be very much more costly in every way.

Like many of you, I have paid for fire insurance since I first began to own a home. Happily, there has never been a fire in my house, but I feel no regret for having paid the premiums and I shall continue to pay them as long as I own any property. When I ask you to support a North Atlantic Treaty, I am simply asking you to pay an insurance premium which will be far, far less costly than the losses we would face if a new conflagration devastated the world.

On this Remembrance Day, as we pay tribute to the heroes of two world wars, let us resolve to do everything in our power to prevent such a calamity. We all want peace, We all want security. We want to be able to employ our resources and our energies in promoting the well-being and prosperity of our own country. That is the reason we signed the San Francisco Charter; and that is the reason we are now seeking to conclude the North Atlantic Pact. Like the aim of the Charter, the aim of such a pact is peace.
