



REFERENCE PAPERS

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DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
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October 29, 1948.

Statements made by the Canadian  
Government on the proposed

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY

(January 20, 1948 - October 25, 1948)

On January 20, 1948, the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. W.L. Mackenzie King in a speech in Ottawa, said:

"So long as Communism remains a menace to the free world, it is vital to the defence of freedom to maintain a preponderance of military strength on the side of freedom, and to ensure that degree of unity among the nations which will ensure that they cannot be defeated and destroyed one by one."

On the day the Brussels Treaty was signed, (March 17, 1948), the Prime Minister said in the House of Commons:

"This pact is far more than an alliance of the old kind. It is a partial realization of the idea of collective security by an arrangement made under the Charter of the United Nations. As such, it is a step towards peace, which may well be followed by other similar steps until there is built up an association of all free states which are willing to accept responsibilities of mutual assistance to prevent aggression and preserve peace....."

"The Canadian Government has been closely following recent developments in the international sphere. The peoples of all free countries may be assured that Canada will play her full part in every movement to give substance to the conception of an effective system of collective security by the development of regional pacts under the Charter of the United Nations."

In the House of Commons on April 29, 1948, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Rt. Hon. L. S. St. Laurent, said that the free nations of the world or some of them might soon find it necessary to consult together on how best to establish a collective security league composed of states which were willing to accept more specific and onerous obligations than those contained in the Charter of the United Nations, in return for greater national security than the United Nations could now give its Members. He went on to say that such a collective security league might grow out of the plans for Western Union now maturing in Europe and that its purpose would not be purely negative but that it would have the

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positive purpose of creating the dynamic counter-attraction to communism of a free, prosperous and progressive society. He concluded by saying that he was sure that it was the desire of the people of Canada that Canada should play its full part in creating and maintaining on the side of peace an "overwhelming preponderance of moral, economic and military force and the necessary unity for its effective use".

On June 11, 1948, speaking in Toronto, Mr. St. Laurent said:

"Six weeks ago, speaking in the House of Commons, I said that the free nations, or some of them, might soon find it necessary to consult together on how best to establish a new collective security league under Article 51 of the Charter. I said that Canada should be willing to enter such a league. I referred to entry into such a league as a fateful decision for Canada.

"Why was it that the proposal met with unanimous support in the House of Commons from members of all political parties? I suggest it is because we, in Canada, are agreed upon the essential bases of our foreign policy.....

"In the interests of the peoples of both worlds - the Communist and the Free - we believe that it must be made clear to the rulers of the totalitarian Communist states that if they attempt by direct or indirect aggression to extend their police states beyond their present bounds by subduing any more free nations, they will not succeed unless they can overcome us all.

"The best guarantee of peace today is the creation and preservation by the nations of the Free World, under the leadership of Great Britain, the United States and France, of an overwhelming preponderance of force over any adversary or possible combination of adversaries. This force must not be only military; it must be economic; it must be moral. Just as in the last war, so also today, we are engaged in a 'struggle for the control of men's minds and men's souls'.

"Victory in war requires a pooling of risks and a pooling of resources. Victory over war requires a similar pooling by the Free Nations. Such a pooling cannot take place unless we realize that the giving of aid to an ally is not charity but self-help.

"We know that, divided, the Free Nations may fall, one by one, before the forces of totalitarian tyranny working within and without their borders, but that, united they can preserve freedom and peace for all. Let us be not only willing but anxious to unite."

On June 19, in the House of Commons, Mr. St. Laurent said that the attitude of the Canadian Government on this matter might justly be described as a "crusade". He said that the Canadian Government thought there would be value in a regional pact whereby the Western European democracies, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada "agreed to stand together, to pool for defence purposes our respective potentials and co-ordinate right away our forces, so that it would appear to any

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possible aggressor that he would have to be prepared to overcome us all if he attempted any aggression".

On June 24, the Minister of National Defence, Hon. Brooke Claxton, speaking in the House of Commons on the defence estimates, said that one of Canada's present defence aims and objectives is to "work out with other free nations, plans for joint defence based on self-help and mutual aid as part of a combined effort to preserve peace and to restrain aggression." He went on to say that our present defence plans are flexible since they might require modification "if, as we hope, Western Union grows into a North Atlantic security understanding."

On September 7, speaking in Toronto, Mr. St. Laurent reported that "the Canadian Government has been urging at home and abroad, in public statements, and through diplomatic channels and discussions, the immediate establishment of a North Atlantic security system comprised of the United Kingdom, the United States and the free countries of Western Europe".

On September 21, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Hon. L.B. Pearson, speaking in Kingston, said:

"The Canadian Government has made it clear that it is not only willing, but anxious, to join the other North Atlantic democracies in establishing a regional collective security pact for the North Atlantic. As you know, representatives of the Canadian Government have been participating for over two months now in informal and exploratory discussions in Washington on the problems of security raised in the Vandenberg Resolution. These discussions have taken place between representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Benelux countries and Canada. All the governments concerned have agreed that no information about these discussions will be made public until a decision is reached. It is not, therefore, possible for me to tell you today how these discussions are going. I can, however, say that the Canadian Government has every reason to believe that the discussions will be fruitful; that Canada is playing a useful part in them.

The Canadian Government has also, since the end of July, had an observer present at the discussions in London of the Military Committee of the Brussels Powers - the United Kingdom, France and Benelux. The United States has also had observers present at these meetings. The reports of this Military Committee go to the Chiefs of Staff of the Brussels Treaty Powers and from them to the Defence Ministers of those five powers.

The Canadian Government has taken these steps towards the creation of an effective regional security system with, I am sure, the overwhelming support of the people of Canada. The people of Canada have given this support knowing that Canada's participation in such a security system may require that, in an emergency, we share not only our risks but our resources. It would, for instance, be the task of a North Atlantic security system, once it is established, to agree upon a fair allocation of duties among the participating countries, under which each will undertake to do that share of the joint defence and production job that it can do most efficiently.

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Such a sharing of risks, resources and obligations must, however, be accompanied by, and flow from a share in the control of policy. If obligations and resources are to be shared, it is obvious that some sort of constitutional machinery must be established under which each participating country will have a fair share in determining the policies of all which affect all. Otherwise, without their consent, the policy of one or two or three may increase the risks and therefore the obligations of all.

This does not necessarily mean that every member of a regional security pact need be represented on all levels in all organs of the regional organization. To insist on this would make some of the organs unworkable. But it does mean that every organ of the regional security organization will derive its powers from a constitutional grant of those powers to it by all the members of the organization."

On October 25, Mr. Claxton, speaking in Toronto, said:

"The countries of Western Union have been working at political, economic and military levels to give substance to the words of this agreement. (The Treaty of Brussels of March 17, 1948). And, a matter of the greatest importance, they, together with the United States and Canada, have been working on the problem of how to strengthen Western Union with a North Atlantic Security Pact. The reason for this is obvious. We all know now that it is much better to stand together than to fall separately. And make no mistake about it. If a war comes, if the Soviet Union commits an act of aggression, it will be an act which will break our peace and ultimately threaten our security. The only war possible today is a war of aggression by the Soviets. I have heard some people - just a few - speak about the possibility of Canada being neutral in such a war. I do not believe that this is even a theoretical possibility for us. Our vital interests, even our territory could be open to attack. The choice in war would be a simple one - Communism or Canada. Our people would never tolerate a position in which we were passive while our country was being defended by others.

For these reasons we have, as Mr. St. Laurent said, pressed for the consummation of a North Atlantic Security Pact. That policy was supported unanimously by the National Liberal Convention in a resolution adopted at Ottawa on August 6th of this year, by the C.C.F. on August 21st and by the Progressive-Conservative Party on October 2nd.

As Western Union becomes stronger, any chance that there might be of the Soviet Union winning an aggressive war will obviously become less. The existence of a North Atlantic Security Pact of mutual assistance including the United States and Canada would further reduce the chance of Soviet success.

The existence of an Atlantic Security Pact in 1935 would have prevented the Second World War in 1939.

On this account the Soviet Union has pressed her efforts to drive the United States, Britain and France out of Berlin because her success in this line would deal a damaging blow at Western Union. It is this effort and the willingness to run the risks which it involves that has added tension to the present situation. I don't believe that the Russian people or even the Soviet leaders want war today; but their intransigent attitude has increased its possibility.

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Even though the situation in Berlin might improve, there would be other points of tension and difficulty. We shall only have a stable peace when the Soviet Government seeks the welfare of their people rather than the extension of their power.

In short, the Soviet attitude since the end of the war has driven and is driving the Western democracies into the same kind of union to preserve the peace as was needed to win the war. It is a defensive union. No one of these countries has any aggressive intentions, and Russian distortions will not alter that fact . . . . .

Plans alone are useless. We must put them into effect.

First, there must be action on the political front so that the countries concerned will consider their essential common objectives of security and recovery as well as their individual interests.

Second, there must be action on the economic front so that the countries concerned will work together for prosperity as well as for security and peace.

Third, there must be action on the military front so that there will be a concerted effort with unity of command, agreed strategy and planned use of resources. . . . .

We know what we want. Some of this work has been done, more is being done and more will be got under way. Our representatives have been in close consultation with the representatives of other nations as to what the role of each would be. Any arrangement such as a North Atlantic Security Pact will be submitted to Parliament for its approval. We are making no commitments without the approval of Parliament. On the other hand we are planning our defences after consultation with others so that what we do will fit into any subsequent plan that may be arrived at after Parliament has given its approval to Atlantic Security."

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Of the speeches listed above, texts of those delivered in the House of Commons may be found in Hansard. Texts of all other speeches, including the one made in the House of Commons on April 29 by the Rt. Hon. L.S. St. Laurent may be obtained from the Information Division, Department of External Affairs.

The following articles have been published recently in the "External Affairs Bulletin":

July, 1948

Text of Vandenberg Resolution	p. 4
Text of Treaty of Brussels	pp. 5 - 6
Mr. St. Laurent's speech of June 11, 1948	pp. 7 - 8
Mr. Claxton's speech of June 24, 1948	pp. 9 - 10

September, 1948

Mr. St. Laurent's speech of September 7, 1948	pp. 11 - 12
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In short, the Soviet attitude since the end of the war has driven and as driving the Western democracies into the same kind of union to preserve the peace was needed to win the war. It is a defensive union. No one of these countries has any aggressive intentions, and Russian intentions will not alter that fact.

There are no real obstacles. We must put them into effect.

First, there must be action on the political front as the countries concerned will consider their essential national objectives of security and recovery as well as their individual interests.

Second, there must be action on the economic front so that the countries concerned will work together for prosperity as well as for security and peace.

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Mr. St. Laurent's speech of June 24, 1948

September, 1948

Mr. St. Laurent's speech of September 1, 1948

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