

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



CANADA

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 48/44 CANADA'S PART IN A REGIONAL DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM

An address by Right Hon. Louis S. St. Laurent, Secretary of State for External Affairs, on International Day at the Canadian National Exhibition, September 7th, 1948.

I think it is only fair both to you, Mr. President, and to me that I should say at the outset that I received your invitation to be your guest at this luncheon before certain happenings in Ottawa just a month ago today. It was extended to me as Secretary of State for External Affairs and it is in that capacity that I accepted it and that I am here at this time.

Needless to say, it is a privilege that I appreciate.

This Exhibition is more than a great civic spectacle. It is a national institution with origins in Canadian life which precede Confederation. Here before us is tangible evidence of national growth; of our present position as one of the great trading nations of the world. This Exhibition inspires a natural pride and confidence in the agriculture, science, industry and arts of Canada. It evokes thoughts of the past and hopes for the future. One of my friends has turned up for me a speech made in 1869 by the President of the association responsible for the Toronto Exhibition of that year. His name was Edwin Mallory and the Exhibition which took place almost 80 years ago moved him to compare farming conditions around 1820 with those of 1869. He said:

"Had any person predicted that in the year 1869 the farmer would be seen sitting upon a comfortable spring seat riding through his fields with an umbrella over his head, enjoying the luxury of his meerchaum pipe, and cutting down more grain or raking up more hay than six or eight men could do in the same length of time with the perspiration streaming from their brows, he would have been called a visionary - another proof that 'truth is stranger than fiction.' Although it can scarcely seem possible, may we not fondly hope that, in this progressive age, at the expiration of another fifty years the boys of today can then look back and see as much improvement as we can now see in the same length of time."

...../Edwin

Edwin Mallory's dream of improvement, of material advance, during the fifty years after 1869 was realized. Man made great progress, and by 1919 he had succeeded in harnessing many more of the forces of nature to his own comfort and convenience. But by 1919 man had also gone through the bloody holocaust of World War One. Satisfaction in our progress towards an easier and happier existence had been blotted out by the slaughter and sacrifice of those dreadful years from 1914 to 1918.

After that ordeal, man looked forward again. The work of discovery and development went on. Life moved swiftly, with more and more mechanical devices setting the dizzy pace. Standards of living improved. What had been luxuries for a few became comforts for many. What had been comforts for many became necessities for all. But again by 1939, material development had so far outstripped moral and social progress that we stumbled into World War II, with slaughter and destruction on a scale undreamed of in earlier years.

And, today, three years after the end of the second world war, we stand again, all too close to the edge of the abyss; more terrified than ever before because we cannot be sure that the advance of science in a world of moral and political anarchy is not as likely to lead to human annihilation than to human welfare; because it seems that never before has the gap between wisdom, real wisdom and mere knowledge been wider.

On this International Day, 1948, there will be many who look back with envy to the fatiguing but untroubled toil of 1869; who will question the value of material and scientific progress which is so apt to widen the area of death and destruction. What is the point of discovering how to release atomic energy if it is to be used to destroy us? I am too optimistic to believe that it will destroy us. But the central problem of our time is not the promotion of scientific and material progress, important though that is, but the finding of solutions for moral and social and political problems; above all for the fundamental problem of peace and security in a world of competing ideologies and clashing ambitions. Without such peace and security, progress may become merely an acceleration of the march to destruction.

What, then, has been the trouble with the world in these years since Edwin Mallory spoke? Why have we moved, not merely from the scythe to the combine, but also from the Charge of the Light Brigade to the furnaces of Belsen and the slave camps of Siberia?

It is very dangerous to overstate and it is dangerous too to over-simplify. But I suggest that there is one trend which signals more than any other the moral deterioration of our time; which has led straight to the mass slaughter of recent years and might lead to the destruction of civilization itself. It is the trend towards the division of humanity into two great camps, by a line which transcends and cuts across every national and political boundary. On the one side of that line are those whose religious and philosophical concepts of life cause them to respect the dignity and decency and freedom of the individual; who believe that government is justified only by the contribution it makes to the welfare of the individual; who insist that government must be founded on law, justice and morality. That, I think, is our side, the side of true Christian tradition, and the side of free, progressive democracy. On the other side of the line are those totalitarian tyrannies, of left and right, when power is the only test of morality in which the individual is a mere machine, existing for the service and constant aggrandizement of a ruthless and amoral state, whose dictates he must obey, and to whose whims he must conform or be crushed.

...../This

This struggle between freedom and despotism is seldom clear cut and is often confused and complicated by other issues. But in our generation the lines have been pretty clearly drawn and the battle has been waged, first against Pan-German Imperialism; then against Nazi and Fascist tyranny; and now against the brutal enslavement of mind and body which is the dread result of aggressive international communism.

It is this struggle which we must win in order to establish the foundation of enduring peace; it is this struggle that colours every aspect of national and international life in 1948. It expresses itself within states in the attempt to overthrow popular and parliamentary democracy and to set up, by force, police despotisms. It shows itself internationally in the aggressive and subversive designs of communist governments against countries which will not accept their reactionary doctrines. It is not without significance that the states most determined at international conferences to diminish the rights of others and exalt their own, are those which at home have the most lawless and autocratic governments.

Even in this favoured land of Canada we cannot wholly escape this issue between freedom and slavery. Freedom, like peace, is indivisible. If it is destroyed anywhere, it is weakened everywhere. What can we do about it? At home, we must so organize our own resources, human and material; we must keep our own house in such good order, that communism will have little on which to feed. We must prove that our brand of democracy, free parliamentary democracy, has done more and can do far more to increase the happiness and well-being of the average man, than communism or fascism, and their totalitarian regimentation ever can do. This should be possible - even easy - if - and this is a big if - we work at democracy and freedom like the communist zealots work at their destroying trade. A Russian communist who has become a free Canadian has written, "Why should Canada turn to Communism? It appears to have infinitely more than the Soviet in every way."

Our first duty, then, is to make democracy work at home. Canada can play an effective part abroad only if she is free, strong, prosperous and united on the home front.

With that priority established, however, we cannot, and should not, escape our obligations as a member of the international community. We must play our part for peace, because to no country is peace more important in every way than it is to Canada. But we must not forget that peace cannot be preserved by national action alone. We must also play our part in the promotion of international trade, for to no country is such trade more essential for prosperity than to Canada. But trade too, and hence prosperity, cannot be assured by national action alone.

So, for peace and for prosperity, Canada is inevitably involved in international affairs. Without any display of self-importance or excessive national pride, we must show - as we have shown - a genuine desire to co-operate with other people who show a like desire to co-operate with us.

Let us look at the second point first, co-operation for prosperity. There is an immediate and vital relation between Canada's external policy and the material welfare of Canadians. A most compelling reason for every Canadian to become interested in international matters is the simple fact, so often stated, that approximately one-third of our total production has to be sold in foreign markets. I need say no

...../more

more than that to prove that foreign policy - even on the material level of dollars and cents - is something that is close to home, and deserves as much attention as any other aspect of our domestic affairs.

When, for instance, we help in the work of European recovery, we are not merely being generous and altruistic; we are trying to preserve Canadian markets and Canadian incomes. The collapse of these markets would mean the loss of jobs for some and less money in the pockets of many more. The relation of external markets to our economy is, in fact, almost exactly the same kind of relation as a crop failure or a famine in more primitive societies. The members of a tribe, 5,000 years ago could not do much about the weather, but that does not mean that a drought had nothing to do with them. We would be pretty foolish today if we tried to act in Canada on the assumption that the international political and economic climate is none of our business and equally foolish if we did not try to do something about it.

Common prudence demands that Canada, the third trading nation in the world, seek and support long-term economic co-operation for international stability and prosperity.

At the same time, common prudence equally demands that we should not do more, or be expected to do more, than our economic and financial strength makes possible. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that our assistance to Europe is for the purpose of restoring the pre-war multilateral pattern of trade. It would be of little value to Canada - and indeed in the long run to Europe itself - if, at the end of the period of North American help, European trade was frozen into patterns and policies which left us in a position where, in self-defence, we were forced to recast our own pattern of trade and make our own bilateral bargains with other states individually. That is not the kind of brave post-Marshall-plan world that we hope to see. There would be grave disappointment here if that were the only result of the efforts now being made. We wish to help put Europe back on its multilateral feet, not on bilateral feet; we want to get away from the ill-omened trading deals and practices of pre-war days; aspirins and mouthorgans for food and raw materials; wheat grown at any cost; self-sufficiency at any price.

But if one objective of our external policy is prosperity, the other and more important one - without which there can be no prosperity or anything else - is peace. What can or should a country like Canada do to help maintain, or rather establish peace in a world divided into the two concepts of life and society to which I have referred?

In the first place, Canada and the other democracies, while making no compromise over their fundamental freedoms, must try to find some basis of co-existence with totalitarian governments, if only on that of mutual toleration. The best way to do that, I suggest, is to broaden the areas of democratic freedom and deepen the sources of democratic strength. The human spirit cannot permanently be enslaved even by the most ruthless despotism. Freedom will be sought, even if it means jumping out of windows! Without intervening in the domestic affairs of any country, the democracies must, by precept and example, encourage freedom everywhere. The democracies must also stand firmly together against every Communist aggressive action or demand. We must do our best - as Canada has done along with other peaceloving states - to make the United Nations an effective agency for international co-operation and understanding; and prevent it becoming - as the communist

...../states

states are trying to make it - an agency for bitter and aggressive political war-mongering. If there are those who are determined to debase the United Nations to these evil ends, well - as Mr. Vishinski said at the recent Belgrade conference - "They were free to come - they are free to go."

The United Nations is our present vehicle for universal and organized international cooperation. It embodies the hope for the solution of differences without resort to force. It would be a supreme tragedy if this hope were brutally destroyed by the actions of certain states who have suffered so terribly from war and who have so much to gain from the effective operation of an organization designed to prevent a recurrence of that suffering. We want, with all our hearts, to keep in that organization of the United Nations, all states who subscribe to the principles and purposes of its Charter. But better no United Nations at all than one permanently reduced to futility and worse, by the actions of some of its members.

If the United Nations in present conditions cannot - and we know it cannot - guarantee the security of its members, that does not mean we need sit back and wait for tyranny and aggression to attack and destroy the democracies one by one.

If co-operation to preserve the peace within the United Nations is impossible on a universal basis, it is possible for the free and peaceful democracies to organize their forces on a regional basis, to ensure collective resistance to and collective defeat of aggression, direct or indirect, from whatever quarter it comes. Such collective action, even if at the beginning only on a regional basis, is urgent and necessary. The threat of aggressive and expansionist communism, harnessed to the ambitions of a very great power, is too great, too direct, and too immediate for us to do nothing until all the freedom-loving nations reach agreement to act together.

That is why 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, Canada and the free countries of Western Europe. We think such a system could create and maintain the necessary preponderance of defensive force over any possible adversary or combination of aggressive adversaries.

Now a collective arrangement of this kind has positive as well as negative values. It can make for prosperity as well as security. It has in it the ultimate hope - and the possibility - of establishing freedom, order and welfare over a wide area. Under present conditions that seems to be our best formula for peace; the concentration of an overwhelming superiority of moral, economic and physical force on the side of those who do not wish to use force, but are resolved to do so together, if the necessity is forced on them. If we can bring this about, it may then come to pass that the forces of aggression, respecting our power for war and convinced of our will for peace, will abandon their mad designs, dismiss their unjustified suspicions, and begin to co-operate with others without requiring that they become mere satellites. Any political association on other than a universal basis in this shrinking world cannot be an end in itself, but only a means to an end. The end is that set out in the Charter we have all signed, the erection of a structure of international co-operation and understanding, in which all men, of every creed and race and colour, may exist together in peace and prosperity.

Canada will, I know, play a worthy part in the achievement of that high objective.

- - - - -