

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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Address by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Canadian Weekly Newspapers Association, Ottawa, February 19, 1957.

I have been wondering what I should talk about tonight. Probably you would like to hear from me, not about your profession, but about my own profession, which, certainly on an occasion like this, is not politics but diplomacy and international affairs. I know that you are interested in this because international affairs affect the life of your communities. It was not very long ago in Canada that these matters seemed very remote from us, remote from the small communities in which we lived, but we have learned since 1914, or we should have learned, that what happens in Korea affects Main Street, what happens in places called Sharm-el-Sheikh and Gaza (names which we used to hear occasionally in our Sunday School lessons) often have a very deep and immediate meaning for the life of our own country and our own community. I know that your interest in these matters is just as great as mine, for I also know that many members of your Association travelled, under the sponsorship and chaperonage of Mr. McCormick, to Europe not so very long ago. I hope that the interest which you already had in international affairs was enlivened and deepened by personal experience of what is going on in other countries.

It is, of course, a healthy thing that everybody in this country, whatever we may be doing, should be interested in and concerned with international affairs and diplomacy - things that used to be far removed from the life of the average man. The permanent Head of the British Foreign Office, who wrote his memoirs a few months ago, said -- I was reading his book a little while ago -- that in a world where war is everybody's tragedy and everybody's nightmare, diplomacy is everybody's business. And so it is. I assure you that the tempo in this profession is not slow and that in following it I am, as Mr. McCormick has said, very often not close enough to my own community. But I do try whenever I get the opportunity, and this is a good opportunity, to bring the policies which we are trying to follow, the ideas which we have in the Government

on foreign policy, to the people and the country because it is important that they should know what we are trying to do. We have more active debates on foreign policy in the House of Commons now than we used to have. There is a good deal more discussion of it. There is more information given and there is more advice received, and that is all to the good. Personally I have been criticized from both extremes, and no one should complain about that. I was criticized in a newspaper the other day for talking too much, and a few days later I read a newspaper which criticized me because I did not say enough about the principles underlying our foreign policy.

One of the difficulties that confronts a Foreign Minister in a democratic country these days is that so much of diplomacy is now conducted in public; so much of it is now conducted by the political representatives of the government instead of the professional diplomatic representative, as used to be the case fifty or one hundred years ago. While I believe in the maximum amount of information in diplomacy for those who are bound to feel the results of failure or success in diplomacy, and while I think the people of a democratic country should know all about the principles and policies under which their government are operating in this field, I still believe, probably more so now than when I first took on this job, that very often the most constructive negotiations could be done better in private than in public.

I think the people should know all about our policies and principles, but I must say that I get a little worried at times about the modern tendency actually to negotiate difficult and complicated problems between states in public. We get some very dramatic examples of the value, if you like, but also of the weaknesses of that kind of diplomacy at the United Nations. Too much of the time diplomatic negotiations in the United Nations resemble working in a goldfish bowl with a microphone and a television camera in the middle of it. Very often diplomacy in camera is more successful than diplomacy before the camera! However, I do not suppose we can do very much about that, about returning to the old state of affairs when things were done quietly. As I get older in this game, however, I must say I appreciate more and more the value of diplomacy by quiet negotiation between experts in contrast to diplomacy by noisy discussion between politicians.

Lord Strang, this is the man I quoted a few moments ago, had something to say about this in the same book. He said -- and he was a professional diplomat -- that those of us who have spent a good part of our lives drafting instructions for ambassadors know how severe a test of policy that is. It is small wonder then that in the climate of today, a minister may sometimes be tempted to take an easier way - to jump into an aircraft with only a general idea of his policy, with no precisely defined formulation of it, and go and talk around a table with his opposite number in the hope that by a kind of joint improvisation something useful may come out of the meeting. The temptation is

to think that a conference is a substitute for a policy. That temptation is a very real one to-day in respect of our negotiations through the United Nations.

There is a tendency,--and it has been very noticeable in the last two to three months, to avoid,--and I am not talking about any one government or any one country--facing some of the realities of national policy in foreign affairs by saying we will leave it all to the United Nations. This is illustrated, I think, very well by our discussions in New York on the Middle East. This, in its turn, often puts burdens on the United Nations which are almost too heavy for that organization to bear. We must not use it as an escape from our own absence of policy or from our own difficulties. United Nations' discussions are no substitute for wisely conceived and intelligently executed national foreign policies. I am one who really believes strongly in the United Nations as the hope of humanity in the long run, because if we cannot work out something through an organization like the United Nations for peace, there is not going to be very much cause for optimism in our future. But as one who does believe in the United Nations, I deprecate this tendency to leave too many things to the Organization and to misunderstand what it can do and what it cannot do.

I have noticed in reading newspapers and listening to discussions in and out of Parliament, a growing misconception of the power and the authority, of the functions of the United Nations. I have noticed a growing criticism of it, born of its frustrations and weaknesses, and of the dangers of international affairs generally. I have noticed a growing tendency to complain - "why doesn't the United Nations do this, why doesn't it do that and why doesn't it take action and why doesn't it order so and so out of such and such a place." The basic fact about the United Nations, one which we should never forget, is that it is not a super-state, it can pass no laws, it has no army to enforce its recommendations, and there is no body of international law behind them, although we are trying to develop that. The United Nations is merely a collection of national governments trying, through international discussion, to secure certain ends by a majority vote - by a two-thirds majority vote. The United Nations - I am talking now about the United Nations Assembly in particular - can act only through recommendations which have nothing but moral force behind them, though moral force can, on occasion, be pretty strong and pretty important.

Therefore, the United Nations can only do what two-thirds of its members wish it to do by voting for a resolution. We had a good illustration, not long ago in the Assembly, of what the United Nations can do and what it cannot do when we were discussing the question of the United Nations Emergency Force for the Middle East. Those were very dramatic and tense

times in New York when things were deteriorating pretty rapidly and no one knew what was going to happen on the morrow. It seemed at that time, and it was a general opinion, that one way out of this difficulty would be to set up -- I am talking about the difficulty of the fighting in the Suez and the possibility of that conflict spreading and the danger of intervention from outside in a way which might have brought about the awful horror of World War III -- it seemed then that one way to avoid it was to interpose some kind of United Nations policy agency between the conflicting forces. That was done, as you know, but it was done only because enough members of the United Nations were willing to vote certain functions and authority for the United Nations Emergency Force, and were willing, by voluntary action, to make it effective; because those governments which were particularly concerned with the operation of the Force, especially governments in whose territory it was operating, were willing to allow it to function there and operate there. This is by way of explaining the limits under which such a force must work.

But also, this was a very encouraging experiment for the future. At least I hope it will be. It is still too soon to say whether it is going to work, but we did show at the time, I think, that in an emergency, in a crisis, the United Nations can act quickly and effectively and improvise a police force which could be of very great value for limited purposes. It cannot fight its way into any country. It cannot begin to operate even as a police force against a great power, but it can and did intervene between two parties to a conflict and it has been, up to the present, effective in securing and supervising a cease-fire. I am told that in its short life, and this Force has only had a life of a very few months, it has built up an organization, an esprit de corps, a morale, which would do credit to any national expeditionary force. If that is true, and I think it is true, a good deal of credit goes to the Canadian Commander of the Force. I learned the other day about some of the difficulties and some of the inspiration General Burns felt at being commander of the first international force of this kind in history; and how well these national contingents were working together and how they were building up, under the blue flag of the United Nations, an international morale, an esprit de corps; how the various national elements were vying with each other in doing their jobs efficiently. One of the national contingents -- they must have been picked men and they must have been sent there under implicit instructions to win friends and influence people -- were not only extremely well-disciplined and kept their camps in fine condition, but they were particularly courteous and friendly to everybody. They did not know the language of the country, they did not know French or English but they knew enough to smile at everybody whom they met and they knew enough to make a good impression on everybody.

We have, I think, started something in this United Nations Emergency Force which, if it can be made to work, may

be of great value for the future, within the limited sphere of operation which is permitted under the United Nations Charter. But, I emphasize again that this is limited, and that the United Nations Assembly can do nothing except carry out the wishes by voluntary action of two-thirds of its members.

There is another limitation of which we are, I think, becoming increasingly conscious. Again, the events of the last two to three months have driven this home. I have talked about the necessity of getting a two-thirds majority for recommendations. You can understand what that means in terms of manoeuvring and lobbying and trying to work out the necessary majority for your particular resolution. We operate down there, of course, on the basis of the sovereign equality of all states. One state, one vote. That means that the vote of Liberia is just as important as the vote of the United States of America when the roll is called. Now, in the Security Council there is not this equality of voting privilege because the big powers, the permanent members of the Council, have a veto. This is a recognition of the differential of power and responsibility between members. In the Assembly there is no such recognition; there is no such distinction. Yet in the exercise of this new authority that is being given to the Assembly, because the Security Council has so often failed to act, we are beginning to see that the same kind of differential is working itself out, although in a different way. Whereas you have the single power veto in the Council, we are now beginning to develop in the Assembly -- and this is a development which has possibilities of great danger for the future of the United Nations bloc voting and bloc veto. More and more members of the Assembly are getting together in trying to pool their voting power. Up to a point this is perfectly all right, but if it is carried too far the bloc vote of the Assembly can have just as damaging an effect on the United Nations as the individual veto has had on the Security Council.

There are, of course, blocs and blocs at the United Nations. There is the Communist bloc which always votes as a unit, and which has four new members this year. It is a solid vote and it has never been known to split.

Over the ten years of United Nations existence there has never been one deviation in the voting record of that bloc; no one member of that bloc has ever voted against the wishes of the Soviet Union. On one occasion, 2 or 3 years ago, when one of the satellite states put forward a motion of its own, it apparently had not cleared it with the Russians, who did not like it. When the voting came, this country had to vote against its own motion. Well, this is one kind of bloc.

But there are other blocs. There is the Commonwealth bloc. Now the Commonwealth bloc, I assure you, does not always vote as a unit. The Commonwealth, and we should not forget this, consists of the United Kingdom as its heart

and centre, but it also consists of three Asian members of the United Nations, as well as of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada. Therefore, the policy of the Commonwealth members in respect of United Nations problems is not always the same. It would be surprising if it were when you consider the inevitable difference of approach to problems between India and, if you like, New Zealand. But the value of the Commonwealth bloc is that we are always trying to get together, and when we cannot support each other, and we do not always find it possible to do that, we do our best to understand each other's position and try to remove gaps between those positions if we possibly can. We have our meetings of the Commonwealth delegations regularly, every few days. No matter how far apart we may be on any particular issue we meet together and we try, by discussion, to understand each other's point of view and, when possible, to support each other. This is the kind of bloc that makes a constructive contribution to the Assembly work, and it is far removed from the other kind we were talking about, the Communist bloc.

Then there is another aspect of United Nations activities which has caused some anxiety among those of us who have attended the United Nations Assemblies. This is the growing feeling against what are called colonial powers; and the use of the United Nations Assembly by countries which have just recently gained their national freedom, to force the pace of national developments in colonies -- even when it would be wise, at times, probably, I was going to say, to slow up that pace. I do not mean quite that, but I believe that there are occasions when colonial peoples who are given independence are free only in name and in law and not in fact. They can become the victims of the first great power which has predatory designs on them. Perhaps it would be better for such people if they took a little more time and won their independence by a more orderly and constructive process so that when they do gain freedom they would be strong enough to hold it.

The United Nations Assembly -- and I do not think we can criticize it for this; in any event it was bound to happen -- has now become a platform for the expression of the desire and the determination of all peoples to gain independence with the least possible delay. Perhaps the greatest revolution in our time is not that of 1917 in Russia, but the revolution which is taking place among the uncounted millions in Asia and Africa; the awakening of these people from the slumber of centuries and their determination to secure not only national freedom but greater human welfare than they have ever known before. That determination is expressing itself every day at the United Nations, in practically every debate we have down there. As a result of this, unfair attacks have been levelled at what are called the colonial powers. Very often we on the Western side get impatient at this criticism of colonial powers

when it is applied only to those empires who have colonies across the seas, and not to the colonial imperial power which has been subjugating neighbouring states. I am thinking, of course, of Russia. The greatest colonial and imperialist power perhaps in all history is the Russian Communist Empire of today. Yet day after day we listen to the representative of the Russian state and its satellites at the United Nations attack countries like France and Great Britain who have done so much in the last century to lead peoples to independence. It is hard to listen to attacks on these nations by countries who have done nothing but subdue free people and are still trying to do that. I also hope, as one who believes in the United Nations, that newly independent powers will show an increasing sense of responsibility in this matter and that there will be a growing appreciation of what countries like France and Great Britain have done to lead people to freedom, as against the reactionary policies of Communist despotism.

There is another danger; the development of a double standard of principle and practice in respect of Assembly resolutions. We pass resolutions aimed at forcing Communist powers to take certain action, for instance, in Hungary, and our resolutions are treated by these powers with contempt, and we cannot do very much about it except focus public opinion, the moral opinion of the world, on their misdeeds. That is something. But when we pass a resolution which is aimed at a power like Great Britain or like France, which has a "decent respect for the opinion of mankind", it accepts the decision and takes action accordingly in complying with it. It is becoming pretty hard for them, however, when they compare what they do about United Nations resolutions with what others refuse to do. If this double standard of practice and principles goes too far, it is bound to weaken the prestige of the Organization and the respect people have for it.

I have been talking about some of the weaknesses of the Organization, which are our own weaknesses, and some of which have become quite apparent in the last 4 or 5 months. But I would not like to finish on that note. What we have to do is to do our best to strengthen the Organization; to remove these weaknesses, to make it a more efficient agency for peace and the settlement of international disputes. Even in its short history of ten years, with all its weaknesses, the United Nations has some very great achievements to its credit. Those who criticize it, and some of these critics are becoming pretty vocal these days and seem to be increasing in number, those who criticize should look back and see what would have happened in certain parts of the world if the United Nations had not been in existence during the last ten years. They should also look forward and try to show how we could possibly be better in any way if it were not to continue in existence.

I do not know anything more futile or foolish than to depreciate and ridicule the United Nations as a mere talking shop. It is also foolish to ignore its achievements. It is true it has not done what we hoped it would do. I remember ten, nearly eleven years ago, at the San Francisco Conference, when we were filled with hope for the future; and thought we had a means of freeing man from the scourge and terror of future war; indeed for a few brief moments we thought we had discovered the promised land of international peace and co-operation. A lot of illusions have been destroyed by hard reality in those ten years. But we would be making a great and tragic mistake if we abandoned our dreams completely, and retired to the international anarchy of national policies without any international organization at least to attempt to bring about some international co-ordination of these national policies.

We should not ignore the weaknesses and the dangerous trends in the United Nations, but rather try to remove them and to do the best we possibly can to strengthen this Organization, which still remains our best hope ultimately for international co-operation on a world basis.

When I say that, I do not mean to minimize the importance of other international organizations. The United Nations is the one world organization, but it does not take the place of more limited, but at least in the field of security, probably more important organizations. I am thinking particularly of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and our Commonwealth of Nations.

As far as the Commonwealth is concerned, it has a unique and peculiar value. But we will never understand that value if we think of the Commonwealth only as a Commonwealth of Anglo-Saxon members with Great Britain as their mother country. Four-fifths of the members of the Commonwealth now come from the Asian world and a great and increasing value of the Commonwealth in the future may well be found in the fact that it is a bridge between Asia and the West. If it loses that value it will certainly lose much of its importance in the world at large. We have gone through difficult times in the Commonwealth in the last 2 or 3 months, but I hope that out of these difficulties, and the shocks to which we have been subjected, will come a greater understanding of the differences inside the Commonwealth and greater appreciation of the value of this association between West and East.

Then there is NATO, which is a going concern in the field of security and which means much more to us in collective security and defence than the United Nations under present conditions could possibly mean.

Above all, inside the NATO coalition, there is Anglo-Franco-American co-operation. That co-operation has had strains put on it (in recent months), but those strains

are being lessened. The damage to close co-operation, I think, is being repaired. Perhaps here again, as a result of the lessons we have learned, we may be able to avoid similar strains in the future.

I was speaking in New York a few weeks ago. My audience was almost entirely American and to them I had this to say about our belief in NATO and in Anglo-Franco-American co-operation which, I am vain enough to think, reflects the feeling of most Canadians. Perhaps you will pardon me if I close by repeating what I said on this particular occasion and to that particular audience.

"The unity of NATO, its cohesion and strength, depend primarily upon the closest possible co-operation between the United States, the United Kingdom and France. They are the heart and soul - and much of the muscle - of the Atlantic Community and it ought to be the task of all of us to work for the maintenance and strengthening of the good relationship between them. There is nothing that I know of in contemporary international affairs which is more important."

Then I went on:

"Perhaps a Canadian may be pardoned for showing a special interest in this triangular relationship; for we are, in a sense, a part of every side of the triangle.

"The United States shares with us the North American continent. We are linked with her by ties of friendship and neighbourliness, of geography and trade and self-interest. We could not break these links even if we desired, and we would be very foolish if we tried.

"Our ties with Great Britain and France have a very special character, evolving from history and tradition and race. We have with them a family relationship of a kind which is easy to feel but hard to describe. It has been driven deep into our national consciousness, into our peoples' feelings. We Canadians have stood side by side with the people of our two mother countries in dark and dangerous days, in 1914 and 1915; in 1939 and 1940; days when, if they had failed or faltered, freedom throughout the world would have fallen."

It is well for us to remind ourselves of these facts in 1957. This is a principle of Canadian foreign policy which, I think, is accepted by all of us in this country, which ever party we may belong to, as something of great value in this shifting and dangerous world. It is a world in which we must look with hope, but also with realism, to the United Nations. But one also in which we must base much of our hope for the future on this most important of all relationships,

that between the Commonwealth, France, and the United States.

Canada has perhaps a more important part to play in this relationship than is at times comfortable for us. We talk a lot about our special privilege because we are American, we are British and we are French; that we have peculiar opportunities for understanding all three countries on whom our future depends to such a great extent. But with these privileges and these opportunities come grave responsibilities. If at times at the United Nations and elsewhere in the discharge of these responsibilities we seem to be accepting commitments which may appear to be a little too heavy for a country of 16 million people, which has problems enough of its own at home, that is due, I think, to the fact, first, that Canada has built up a reputation in war and peace as a country that accepts and discharges its responsibilities, that has no particular axe to grind, no ambitions of an unworthy kind.

I hope that we will continue to act in the discharge of our international responsibilities in such a way as to deserve the good repute which I think we have gained.

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