



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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A statement by the Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, at the United Nations General Assembly in Paris, on September 28, 1948.

It affords me particular pleasure to say to the Government and people of France how deeply the Canadian delegation appreciates the choice of Paris as the place of meeting of the Third Assembly of the United Nations. This city, over many centuries, has been a radiant centre of political and cultural achievements. No country represented here is so remote from Paris, nor so distinct in tradition from France, that it has not been greatly influenced by the movements of enlightenment and progress which have had their origin in this city and in this country. Of no country and of no people is this truer than of my own. One third of the people of Canada have ancestors who came from the shores of France. They still speak its language and share the traditions of French civilization.

As I listened to the eloquent and moving speech of the President of the French Republic at the opening of this Assembly, and as I recalled the great services which M. Vincent Auriol has rendered, and is rendering, to his country, I could not but reflect upon the continuing significance of the role of France among the nations. After all she has suffered and endured in two wars, France has again taken her place in the front rank of the world community. Canadians never doubted that France would rise again to the full stature of her glorious past.

What France records of man's ability to develop political freedom within the framework of organized society should remind us that, in the work of the Assembly, we are carrying forward a great tradition. It should strengthen our conviction that, through the instrument of the United Nations, we also, in our day, have an opportunity to develop political ideas, and forms of political organization of service not to one nation only, or to a few nations, but to mankind.

This Assembly of the United Nations affords an opportunity for judging to what extent the United Nations has thus far found it possible to further the great purposes to which it is dedicated. We have now an opportunity to measure the work done, and to survey work that remains to be done. This Assembly should be made the occasion for a real audit of achievement. It should equally be made the occasion for a searching analysis of failure, where such has occurred.

If we are true to ourselves, we will admit that there is not one among us who has not been discouraged by the difficulties which have beset the path of our new organization, and who today is not disturbed

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by doubts and uncertainties. Too many of us have assumed that the high aims and purposes of an organization which seeks the betterment of mankind throughout the world could not fail to have a universal appeal. We have not been sufficiently conscious of the realities of the world situation.

I for one believe the United Nations has attempted to accomplish far too much, in far too short a time. We have overlooked the fact that any world institution, especially one which aims at effective co-operation among all nations, is certain to be of slow growth. It is true that nature never rests. It is equally true that nature never hastens. One reason why the international institutions the United Nations have created since the close of war are not working in the way we hoped they might, is that the sense of a world community of interest on which these institutions must rest, and which, in themselves, they tend to create, has not yet been developed. It may take a long time to develop.

The United Nations, I feel, must seek to close the gap, already far too wide, between the purposes which are within its reach, and those which exceed its grasp. We must not dissipate the moral and other resources of a world which desperately needs peace on too many secondary objectives, however desirable they may be in themselves. We do well to recognize that the advance of science demands, in an increasingly urgent and imperative way, the existence of a community sense which is world wide. In seeking to create this sense of a world community, the United Nations is certain to be confronted by many difficulties. In thinking of these difficulties, I have sometimes wondered whether the experience in co-operation and association of the countries of the Commonwealth of Nations, to which Canada is proud to belong, has not some lessons, both positive and negative, which might be of help in meeting like difficulties in the development of a world community sense.

It is true the countries of the Commonwealth have never had a charter, have never appointed a Secretary-General, and have never taken a decision by a simple or two-thirds majority. They have nevertheless, over many years, worked together with an increasing appreciation of interests they have in common. It is true they have by no means solved all their difficulties; some of these difficult situations have found their way on to the agenda of the United Nations. Nevertheless, by and large, it is true that the countries of the Commonwealth do try to understand each other's problems, institutions and points of view. Between themselves they have sought agreements by accommodation and mutual forbearance. Without positive formulation, they have contrived to share in large measure a common point of view. This community sense they have developed despite the differences in language, race, tradition, and religion which characterize the member states. In this more limited experiment in international political association there are some things which may be of value in shaping the development of the United Nations.

By our presence here in Paris, we are reminded not only of what may be accomplished through the combined efforts of nations, but also of the peril which again threatens civilization. The conflicts of the last eighty years have flowed back and forth across this land of France and have exacted an appalling penalty of its people. Since the latest and greatest of these conflicts, the nations have set themselves the double task of reconstructing the shattered political and economic life of Europe, and of preventing a recurrence of such conflicts. These are aims towards the realization of

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which every nation might have been expected to co-operate wholeheartedly. It must frankly be admitted, however, that we have cause for misgiving about the progress of both these undertakings.

The reconstruction of Europe, stimulated by aid from countries which suffered less directly from the war, and carried forward by the co-operative effort of the peoples of Western Europe, has, fortunately, made some progress. On the other hand, rather than participate in this work of reconstruction, from which they themselves would benefit, certain nations have chosen not merely to stand aside, but, wilfully or otherwise, to misrepresent and obstruct the efforts of others. This obstruction in the task of reconstruction is unfortunately but one example of what would appear to be a policy of deliberate hindrance of the political and economic reorganization of the postwar world. In so far as this may be so, we cannot be otherwise than profoundly concerned for the well-being of the entire work of reconstruction and peacemaking which has been undertaken since the war.

It will come as a painful surprise, if not as a shock, to my fellow countrymen in Canada to learn that anyone addressing this Assembly could have left the impression that members of the United Nations had ignored the interests of the peoples of those countries which suffered most from the war, and from the severe hardships which were imposed by the Hitlerites. Such, certainly, was the impression left on my mind in listening to the address of the delegate of the U.S.S.R. on Saturday morning last. I find the impression left on others was similar to my own.

The specific references, it is true, were to the Economic and Social Council and Economic Commission for Europe, but the impression conveyed was that the United Nations had been indifferent to the important interests of the people of those countries which had suffered most. This certainly is not true of the United Nations as expressed in the contributions of its member nations.

I am sure the Assembly would be glad to hear from the representatives of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia what quantity of farm implements, how many motor trucks, how many locomotives, to say nothing of food supplies and medical aid, their countries have received, since the end of the war, by gift and credit, from countries, members of the United Nations, that have sought to help in the common task of reconstruction.

I speak with some knowledge and feeling on this question because the people of Canada have taken their full share of the load of providing relief and assistance for the war-shattered countries of Europe - through mutual aid, through military relief, through UNRRA, as well as through direct governmental credits of over 500 million dollars for the continent of Europe. I can speak for the Government of which during these years I have been the head, and which recommended to Parliament the necessary appropriations. I can speak for the Parliament of Canada which made the appropriations possible, and for the people of Canada who supported these policies for the rehabilitation of the economy of war-devastated countries, and supplemented them by sending millions of dollars more, through private and voluntary channels, for the relief of the needy and destitute. Their single purpose was to assist the peoples who had suffered most from the war to rebuild their homes, restore their agriculture, restart their industries - so that their countries could take their places again in the world economy and world community to which we all belong.

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What I have said about the Canadian effort, and the spirit that inspired it, holds good, I believe, in every particular, for the many times greater contribution in each of these fields that the United States has made, and continues to make, towards the recovery of Europe's economic independence and well-being.

The second major undertaking of the postwar world has been the establishment of machinery for the settlement of international disputes and for the maintenance of peace. Great hopes have been entertained that the establishment at San Francisco of the United Nations would mark the beginning of a world organization which would provide real security. Today, this task stands in equal peril.

The settlement of international disputes, through machinery provided by the United Nations, has made some progress, though it is still far from having achieved success. Its success or failure would appear to have been dependent upon the extent to which the application of the veto has been in accordance with the general consensus of view of the member nations. In areas where it is clear that the veto has not been applied to further the special interest of one or more member nations rather than the general interest, procedures of negotiation and compromise, mediation and adjustment have been undertaken, and have proved helpful and constructive. However, in every area, and on every subject where it is obvious that the veto has been applied to further some particular interest, rather than the general interest, the process of compromise and adjustment has been ignored, and little or no progress as a consequence has been made.

The stalemate which has resulted from this state of affairs affects many situations which are of direct and imperative concern in the life of all free nations. Its continuance cannot fail to lead to threats to freedom arising not only from aggressive aims at territorial expansion, but, as well, from sinister plans to undermine the structure of free government within the borders of individual nations.

There is no nation, however great, which, in a world such as the one in which we live today, can defend its freedom solely with its own resources. All nations are, therefore, interested in security. Where existing machinery for the prevention or settlement of international disputes has proven or is proving inadequate to effect security, additional means must be sought.

Security for individual nations, under such circumstances, can be assured only by the effective co-operation, and the united power of those nations whose determination to maintain their freedom constitutes a strong bond of community between them. It is not surprising therefore that certain nations, knowing that their security depends on collective action in some form, and which are not yet able to achieve that security on the universal basis which the United Nations contemplates, should, pending this large accomplishment, seek to achieve their security on a less than universal basis.

As nations, we are all members one of another. The good of each is bound up in the good of all. This sense of community of interest cannot be too highly, too rapidly, or too widely developed. It is vital to the defence of freedom to maintain a preponderance of moral, economic and military strength on the side of freedom - all else is wholly secondary. To direct its energies to this imperative end seems to me to be the supreme task of the United Nations today.

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There is a further all-compelling reason why a world community sense cannot be too completely developed. I mean, of course, the urgent necessity for the effective control of atomic energy. Scientific achievements have in recent years placed this terrible weapon of destruction at the disposal of mankind. The processes by which atomic energy is released are now well known to the scientists of all nations. The ability to make and release the atomic bomb will, in the course of time, be available to any nation which possesses and devotes sufficient skill to that purpose. The international control of atomic energy might change it from a force of terrible destruction into a power which could greatly benefit the whole of mankind.

In the presence of the menace which atomic energy constitutes, every nation, in the interest of its own people as well as those of other lands, cannot strive too earnestly to ensure this mighty transformation. The hope of the world is, I believe, centred today in the United Nations as the one world organization capable of establishing this international control.

In his address to this Assembly last Saturday, the representative of the U.S.S.R. said that after thirty months of work by the Atomic Energy Commission there had been no positive results, that the work of the Atomic Energy Commission had remained fruitless. He sought to place the blame on the United States for the failure, thus far, to bring about the international control of atomic energy. I do not think this is borne out by the facts. The Government of Canada has taken part in the important discussions and negotiations on this subject since their inception. I am therefore able to speak with some knowledge of the facts.

The facts show conclusively that not only has the United States striven earnestly and hopefully for a solution, but that, subject to proper safeguards, they have unhesitatingly offered to give to the world the far-reaching advantages which came to them in consequence of their vast efforts in this field during the late war.

Two years ago, when the meetings of the Atomic Energy Commission were commenced, no one was certain that it would be possible to produce a workable plan in the international control and development of this great source of energy. A plan for this purpose has, however, been developed. The nations of the world, which now possess the resources and the skill for the production of atomic energy, have stated their willingness to take part in the operation of the plan.

The representative of the U.S.S.R., in denying that substantial progress has been made toward the working out of arrangements for the international control of atomic energy, stands almost alone in this view. Every other country which has participated in the work of the Atomic Energy Commission established by this Assembly at its first session in London, which has been free to express its conclusions, has joined in full acceptance of the majority report of the Commission.

The report of the Commission will come before the Assembly later for detailed study and approval. At that time, members of the Canadian delegation will develop the reasons for Canada's acceptance of its proposals. In our opinion they are based on the inescapable facts of atomic energy, and constitute the only method by which these new dread forces may properly be brought under effective control in the interest of peace and well-being of all the peoples of the world.

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In international relations, as, indeed, in all human relations, attitude and will are of first importance. A solution of most problems is not difficult to find where men or nations are really anxious to discover common ground, and bring their wills to that task. Where, however, there is no will to peace, and an attitude of antagonism rather than of co-operation is deliberately fostered, the appeal soon becomes one to force, rather than to reason. Wherever the appeal is to force, security, which is essential to the preservation of freedom, demands a preponderance of strength on the side of freedom. This is necessary, not from any thought of aggression, but to save from destruction, the very nations and peoples who have at heart the aim of creating better conditions for others as well as for themselves.

The problems of today are not going to be solved by any formula. They will be solved only to the degree that each individual does his part, and each nation does its part to further the common good, by an attitude of good-will towards all. In this particular, example is all powerful. Patience and forbearance are not signs of weakness. They are the hall-marks of strength.

If this world of ours is to escape destruction, international relationships, characterized by antagonism and coercion must make way for a world community which recognizes that "over all nations is humanity". The habit of mind which resolves problems in terms of class, or race or of national prestige must be abandoned, and its place taken by a world outlook.

Let us not be deceived. The terrible truth is that the nations have yet to decide which is to prevail: the law of blood and of death, ever imagining new means of destruction, and forcing nations to be constantly ready for the battlefield; or the law of peace, work and health, ever evolving new means of delivering man from the scourges which beset him. Mankind has still to discover whether violent conquest or the relief of humanity is to triumph in the end.

Whatever may be said by or of individuals, the peoples of the world - in every community - ardently desire world peace. Today they are looking anxiously to all the representatives of all the nations at this Assembly, to work together towards the fulfilment of this great purpose. The proceedings of this Assembly may help to determine whether the world is to be plunged into the darkness of anarchy, or whether mankind is to continue to move towards the light of ordered freedom and universal peace.