

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

An address by Mr. Hume Wrong, Canadian Ambassador to the United States, to the Canadian Club of Toronto, March 22, 1948.

Since I have been concerned with the course of international affairs for a good many years, I imagine that you expect me to say something about the international situation. When some months ago I accepted the invitation to speak to the Canadian Club I had hoped that it might be possible for me to find a cheerful subject in this field. It would be pleasant if I could talk optimistically about the state of the world today. It did not look very happy when the invitation was received, and it looks worse now. While there are bright spots, these are rifts in a stormy and threatening sky. The subjugation of Czechoslovakia, tragically dramatized by the suicide of Jan Masaryk on March 10th, has everywhere heightened the sense of danger and increased a tension already far too acute for any comfort of mind.

I am not a pessimist, in that I believe that we certainly are not bound inevitably to fight another great war in order to prevent our freedom from being overthrown. I am not an optimist, in that I believe that there is no short or easy road to security and lasting peace. We shall, I am sure, continue to be faced for several years at least with recurrent crises and pressing anxieties which will affect the lives of every one of us.

We must not, of course, allow disillusionment to turn into despair or anxiety into panic. There are real grounds for hope. Some of our disillusionment arises from having set our hopes too high in the last stages of the war, just as we did twenty and more years ago after the other war. The major part of it comes from the positive actions of others, actions which a huge majority of the people of the Western world now recognize as menacingly hostile to their chosen way of life. When the Charter of the United Nations was being drafted in the spring of 1945, it would have seemed almost incredible that the victorious allies, after enduring the tortures and putting forth the efforts that won the war, should so soon have ranged themselves in two opposing groups, and started to conduct what Mr. Walter Lippmann has lucidly christened a cold war.

The result is that we have today what the Secretary of State of the United States, General Marshall, recently called "a very, very serious situation", - so serious as to lead the President of the United States last Wednesday to request the temporary revival of wartime conscription and the inauguration of a continuing system of universal and compulsory military training in peacetime.

A part of its seriousness comes from the development of a skillful technique of conquest from within, of which the recent events in Prague are the latest of several examples. Some of you will remember that in 1919 one of the difficult problems before the Paris Peace Conference was to find effective means of protecting minorities inside

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a country from oppression by a majority of a different race. Provisions to this end were written into the treaties of peace, and one of the duties of the League of Nations was to watch over their observance.

Today there is another problem. In several countries disciplined minorities, prompted and supported from abroad, have succeeded in imposing their rule on the majority. This is what has happened in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary, in Poland, in Rumania and in others of the satellites. This new technique of conquest has been achieved by bloodless, or almost bloodless, methods, and often with an appearance of legality. However legal in form, its success is not based on any principle acceptable to the democracies; and it brings with it the simultaneous introduction of all the deplorable machinery of the police state.

The democratic countries have thus been set a new and very tough problem. It is not the old problem of protecting the rights of the minority from being subverted by the majority, difficult though that is. It is a new problem, whether it is possible to protect the rights of the majority, perhaps a very substantial majority, from being subverted by a minority practising the political strategy of communism of the Soviet brand. What happened three or four weeks ago in Czechoslovakia was but the last stage of this process, the assumption of complete power by men already largely in control. A pressing current danger is that the pattern will be repeated in Italy and in other countries now outside the iron curtain which are very important to the safety of the rest of the world.

It was Benjamin Franklin who said at the signing of the Declaration of Independence, "We must all hang together or assuredly we shall all hang separately". Last week the United Kingdom, France and the Low Countries concluded a far-reaching economic and military alliance. Simultaneously the President of the United States told Congress: "I am confident that the United States will by appropriate means extend to the free nations the support which the situation requires. I am sure that the determination of the free countries of Europe to protect themselves will be matched by an equal determination on our part to help them to protect themselves". Last week also Mr. Mackenzie King, in greeting the signature of the Brussels Treaty, said: "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."

These are good signs of determination that free countries shall no longer be "hung separately". It can be done without conflicting with the Charter of the United Nations. It was foreseen at San Francisco that the Security Council might be paralyzed by the veto, and what are now Articles 51 and 52 were added to the Charter. Article 51 preserves "the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence" pending action by the Security Council. Article 52 authorizes regional agreements between member states. The Charter was designed as a constitution for the international community. Although it is far from a perfect instrument, the trouble today does not arise from its defects, but from the fact that there is no international community. There is no common purpose among the nations to join together in an honest search to remove the troubles that plague the world. We cannot have a collective system without a collective will to make the system work.

In the economic field the European Recovery Program should accomplish a great deal if carried through as projected. It is a continuation on a larger scale of the efforts to restore stability which

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began before the end of the war and have been carried on since then by various methods. These methods include the work of UNRRA, together with the provision of loans and credits by a few of the more fortunate countries to the less fortunate whose economies were shattered or dislocated by the war. I need not say here that so far Canada has done its full share, or add that our own difficulties for the time being make it impossible for us to continue on the same scale.

It would have been a rash prophet who predicted in 1946, when the loan to the United Kingdom was before the Congress of the United States, that less than two years later the Senate of the United States would have adopted by a vote of 69-17 a measure authorizing the granting in the next year of further assistance to Western Europe of \$5,300,000,000, most of it to be expended as direct grants in aid and not in the form of loans. If one includes in the vote the Senators whose position was announced but who were absent from the division, the total poll would have been 76 in favour and only 20 against - a majority of nearly 4 to 1. I mentioned that there were some bright spots in the gloomy sky. This is the chief of them - that the United States has shed its old armour of isolation, which used to seem so safe and satisfactory in peacetime and proved so antiquated and useless in time of war. The United States is in truth the most powerful country in the world, and one cannot but be relieved and heartened that its people are realizing the sobering responsibilities of power.

The House of Representatives will also approve the European Recovery Program within a few days, and the great project launched by General Marshall on June 5th last year will very shortly become a reality. There will undoubtedly be difficulties in getting it going. There will be further argument over the exact sum to be appropriated by the Congress, since under the procedures of Congress both an authorization act and an appropriation act are required to make funds available, and the second need not carry the full amount authorized by the first. Delay in the passage of the appropriation, however, does not mean that operations cannot begin soon after the President signs the present measure, as it carries a special provision making available a billion dollars to get the program started.

I am not going to discuss the possible effects on Canada of the operation of the European Recovery Program beyond saying that it contemplates that the Administrator will make available to the governments of the United Kingdom and the other participating countries dollars which they can use to assist in financing their purchases of essential supplies from Canada and Latin America. We cannot yet tell exactly how this aspect will work out in practice, or what proportion of the trading deficit of Western Europe with Canada and Latin America may be financed in this way. I am sure that it will be in our interest to continue to carry as much of the load as we can.

No matter in what measure Canada may be helped by the operation of the European Recovery Program, there can be no doubt of our stake in its success. If, through outside aid and self-help, economic stability can be restored in Western Europe, the world will be a much pleasanter and safer place for us all. Economic security and political security go hand in hand; you cannot have one without the other. You cannot have either today without the United States undertaking the responsibilities of the strongest power in the world. That is why the European Recovery Program, together with the recent evidence that the old fear in the United States of entangling alliances is past, counterbalances the gloomy events in Central and Eastern Europe which are so vivid in our minds.

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I now wish to turn briefly to some matters concerning the relations between Canada and the United States. At one stage in our history not so very long ago it could be maintained with some justice that there was a contradiction between Canadian membership in the British Commonwealth of Nations and very close and friendly relations with the United States. When the United States and the United Kingdom have pulled in opposite directions, we Canadians have tended to suffer from a split personality, because our interests and sympathies were divided. When they pull together, we live a lot more easily. They are pulling together now, and seem likely to continue to do so, no matter what political changes there may be in either country.

When Canadians are inclined to be critical of the United States, it is well for them to remember that most smaller countries next door to very great powers have had a rough time. Reflect on what has happened in the course of this century to Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, Rumania, Finland and many others. Switzerland and Sweden are the only small countries of Europe outside the Iberian Peninsula which have not been overrun once or more times since 1914 by a powerful neighbour. Can we Canadians doubt that we are fortunate to have the United States as our one great neighbour? We have, of course, our problems, our irritations, our resentments, in our dealings with the United States, but how different they are in quality from those which afflict the small nations of Europe and Asia!

One of our complaints, and a reasonable one, is that not enough is known about Canada in the United States. In my experience most Americans when they think about Canada, which they do not do very often, appear to have a high regard for their northern neighbour. While there is a lot of misunderstanding and misconception, only rarely does one come across criticism or complaint of the way in which we manage our affairs. The ignorance of Canada is not dangerous ignorance; but, of course, knowledge is to be preferred to ignorance. Every now and then somebody displays his ignorance by making a notable blunder; and there is a recurrent demand in Canada that something more should be done to tell the people of the United States about our record and achievements. I wish someone could devise a satisfactory method of doing this. There are 145 million people in the United States, and it is quite a job to educate them.

Anyone who has had much to do with the business of public relations abroad would agree that you certainly cannot please everybody and frequently seem to please nobody. I can illustrate from three articles which happened to reach my desk in the last fortnight. The first, in a Washington despatch to a Canadian weekly, said, among other things: "Working American newspaper men have complained to this reporter for several years that Canadian Government public relations or informational facilities are probably the worst in the United States capital. There is literally a hunger for news from Canada in American publications". The second, in a Canadian monthly, was not so restrained in language, and the following sentence does not do full justice to its emphasis, "All this adds up to the fact that our public relations in Washington stink, and that the Ambassador must bear his share". The third was a long complaint in a despatch to a very well known newspaper in the United States that the Canadian Government was trying to "shame Congress into approving the Marshall Plan" by emphasizing the magnitude of the financial aid given by Canada since the war to the United Kingdom and Western European countries. This article asserts: "The Canadian Embassy in Washington is a fountainhead of propaganda which compares American and Canadian aid programs to America's 'disadvantage'". I find it a little hard to understand how one can be a "fountainhead of propaganda" and at the same time "utterly useless" in this respect, as one of the Canadian critics stated.

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You can regard these extreme opinions as cancelling each other out. But there is a real problem here, and no-one should be satisfied with what is being done. One of the difficulties is that Canadian news does not stand up well in these days in the competition for space among the material reaching the desks of news editors. The sober journals have a flood of foreign news of a more spectacular kind than that which Canada produces, as well as huge demands for space for domestic news in an election year. For the sensational journals Canada does not provide very often that mixture of crime, sex and infamy which is their special fare. If we did things in Canada in a more dramatic way, and were less reliable, - in short made greater nuisances of ourselves - we would doubtless find a good deal more about Canada in the American papers. But would the game be worth the candle?

The most effective sort of friendly publicity which Canada, or any other country, can hope to secure in the United States is that which is written by Americans for Americans. We have a thin press in this respect, but it is good so far as it goes. Some of you may remember an article by Mr. Walter Lippmann three or four weeks ago in which he took to task what he called "uninformed and unneighbourly" criticism of Canada in an Arizona paper, and made this his text for setting people straight on Canadian aid in the reconstruction of Europe. More recently the most widely circulated periodical in the United States, Life Magazine, began its editorial as follows: "Canadians are the closest friends we have in the world and they are in serious economic trouble. From the United States they need and deserve considerably less apathy about their plight". The article concluded by advocating a customs union between Canada and the United States. We are all at liberty to dislike its conclusion, but there is no cause to quarrel with its understanding and sympathetic tone.

Of course Americans do not know as much as we should like about Canada, but do Canadians know enough about the United States? The average Canadian probably knows a good deal more about what goes on in the United States than the average American knows about what goes on in Canada. For one thing, there is a lot of news from the United States in his papers. He usually reads one or more American magazines, listens to American radio programs, sees American moving pictures. That is inevitable when 12½ million people live alongside 145 million people. It is like the case of Belgium: Belgians know a lot more about France than Frenchmen know about Belgium.

Yet I wonder whether people in Canada have as great an understanding of the United States as they should. This, for instance, is an election year. How many of you in this room could state accurately the procedure for electing a President of the United States, which is set down in the Constitution and has been followed for nearly 160 years. I suspect that if Dr. Gallup were to take one of his polls in Canada on how the President is chosen, he would find that a big majority think that next November all the voters will mark a ballot paper containing the names of the Democratic, Republican and other candidates, and that the candidate with the largest total will be elected. It is a much more complicated business than that. We might think of this when next we are irritated by some foolish utterance about Canadian political institutions. Can we agree that there is much room on both sides for a better appreciation and understanding of the other country?

Never has there been greater need for full and friendly comprehension. The drawing together of the democratic countries in order to check the stealthy march of communism must be based on the closest possible understanding between the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and the other countries of the British Commonwealth, for that is a broad and firm foundation. That such an understanding is now being strengthened from day to day is certainly something solid and comforting to contemplate amid the alarms and crises of 1948.