



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 48/41

"VIEWS OF CANADA ON MATTERS BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS"

An address by Hon. A.G.L. McNaughton,
 Delegate of Canada to the United
 Nations, to the United Nations Summer
 Course Lecture Series, in the New
 School for Social Research, New York
 City, August 2, 1948.

It is a pleasure for me to speak to this group this afternoon on Canada's policy in the United Nations. I have been asked to give the viewpoint of my Government on all issues which have come before the United Nations. In the time at my disposal, however, it would be manifestly impossible for me to deal adequately with all the many and serious controversial issues which have come before the United Nations and to comment on the position of my Government concerning these issues. I shall, with your permission, therefore deal with the broad basis of my Government's policy in regard to the United Nations and shall discuss that policy in more detail as it affects one very important field of activity of the United Nations — namely the attempt to secure a system of collective security.

In doing this I shall mention more particularly the attitude of my Government towards the international control of atomic energy; the question of disarmament; the implementation of Article 43 of the Charter; and the establishment of regional pacts for collective self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter. In following this procedure I shall therefore not touch on many important political issues which have come before the United Nations — such as the question of Palestine; the problem of Indonesia; the Czechoslovak question; the problem of the veto and many other equally important subjects. If, however, at the end of my speech, you wish to ask me questions on any of these subjects, I shall be glad to place myself at your disposal.

General Canadian Policy Towards the United Nations

Canada's policy towards the United Nations is, perhaps, most concisely stated in an extract from a speech delivered by our present Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Hon. Louis S. St. Laurent, in Toronto, January 13, 1947:

"The growth in this country of a sense of political responsibility on an international scale has perhaps been less rapid than some of us would like. It has nevertheless been a perceptible growth; and again and again on the major questions of participation in international organization, both in peace and war, we have taken our decision to be present. If there is one conclusion that our common experience has led us to accept, it is that security for this country lies in the development of a firm structure of international organization."

Canada's policy is thus one of full support for the United Nations.

My Government is, however, fully aware of the inadequacy of the United Nations at the present time in providing the nations of the world with the security which they require. The realities of this situation must be faced and the policy of the Canadian Government in respect to it were summarized briefly in a statement by Mr. St. Laurent in the House of Commons, April 29, 1948.

Mr. St. Laurent then stated that the Canadian Government is opposed to encouraging or fostering any activity which might, at this moment, provide any state with a legitimate — I emphasize the word "legitimate" — excuse for withdrawing from the United Nations. On the other hand, he said that we shall not refrain from any action which we know to be right merely because it displeases certain other member states. We shall continue to give every assistance to constructive efforts to make the United Nations into the instrument for security and co-operation which it was originally designed to be; and in the meantime utilize its present possibilities to the fullest extent.

Mr. St. Laurent added that we shall oppose demands on the United Nations which, at the moment, are too heavy for its resources. We do not believe, for example, that it should attempt to undertake administrative responsibilities and police activities in various parts of the world, before it has been given the means which may be required for carrying out these responsibilities.

My Government also recognizes that the effectiveness of the United Nations is, at present, greatly reduced by the divisions which have grown up between the countries of Eastern Europe and the countries of the rest of the world. Until, therefore, there has been some measure of settlement of the issues that divide the world, we should not expect too much from the United Nations in its present form and organization. No one, for instance, should expect that the machinery of the United Nations will produce a solution to problems on which the two most powerful nations of the world may have diametrically opposed views, which cannot be reconciled.

During the last two years, our faith in the United Nations, as an effective organization for peace and security, has been shaken. What is unshaken is our determination to make of it, or within it, an effective organization for these purposes. Unshaken also, is our faith that this can be achieved. It is therefore important that the United Nations be kept in existence and that we make every possible use of the very high degree of vitality which it has shown, particularly in those disputes which are not directly within the area of conflict between the Eastern European states and the rest of the world.

Canada's willingness to stand for, and our ability to secure election to the Security Council last autumn was an earnest of our desire to play our full part in the United Nations. Yet I would like to point out that the position of a power of the middle rank on the Security Council is a difficult one. A small power is, in a sense, by its very smallness, relieved from much of the responsibility which participation in decisions involves, and which the implementation of such decisions requires. At the other extreme, the Great Powers can protect their positions with the veto. A "middle power" such as Canada is, however, in a different position. Its economic strength and political influence are of importance, and the moral and material contribution which it can make to collective action, as the last two World Wars have shown, is very significant. The judgments which the Canadian Government makes on United Nations matters must, therefore, be made with care and a sense of responsibility, particularly, if I may say so, because Canada is a country which has the reputation of conscientiously carrying out the commitments into which it has entered. Yet it is not always easy for us to secure credit for independence and honesty of

argument and decision. Nevertheless we will continue to make our decisions objectively, in the light of our obligations to our own people and their interest in the welfare of the international community.

This, therefore, is the underlying policy of my Government towards the United Nations. I would like now to turn from the general to the specific and to give an account of the position which Canada has taken on those important issues which have come before the United Nations under the broad heading of collective security.

COLLECTIVE SECURITY

(a) The International Control of Atomic Energy

One of the most important issues which have come before the United Nations in its short existence concerns the attempt to set up a universally acceptable method for the international control of atomic energy. As you all know, the General Assembly established an Atomic Energy Commission for this purpose nearly two and a half years ago and yet no such generally acceptable agreement has so far been reached. The Atomic Energy Commission has now made three reports and these were recently discussed in the Security Council. Again no agreement was reached in the Council and the most that could be achieved was a resolution which transmitted the Atomic Energy Commission's Reports for consideration at the next Session of the General Assembly "as a matter of special concern".

I would like to mention in some detail the views of my Government on this subject and our understanding of the reasons for the impasse which has developed. These views were expressed by me on instructions from my Government, at a meeting of the Security Council, June 11, 1948. In the first place it is a matter of profound disappointment to us that the Atomic Energy Commission, after two years of sincere effort to fulfill its mandate, must now report failure to reach agreement. The reason for this lack of agreement is set out clearly in the various reports of the Atomic Energy Commission. In our view, the situation revealed in these reports does not call for mutual recriminations but rather for a serious effort to face up to realities; for no one can fail to realize the dangers resulting from international rivalry in the field of atomic energy and, in particular, from competitive efforts to obtain atomic weapons. This dangerous condition will confront the world so long as a universally acceptable and enforceable agreement for control does not exist.

The divergence of view which months of patient discussion in the Atomic Energy Commission has failed to resolve has, as you are all probably aware, arisen in consequence of the insistence of the Soviet Union that a convention outlawing atomic weapons, and providing for their destruction must precede any agreement for the establishment of a system of international control. The majority of the Commission, including Canada, on the other hand hold the view that such a convention, unless accompanied by effective safeguards, would offer no protection to the nations of the world.

Throughout all the efforts of the Commission I can claim that the Canadian delegation has devoted itself to the search for a method of control which would give security to all nations. We have, I believe, shown that we were willing to examine with an open mind any and all proposals put before us including those which were advanced by the Soviet delegation.

We had hoped that technological and scientific facts as revealed in the discussions of the Scientific and Technical Committee and through the testimony of experts, would point the way to what was necessary for effective control and thereby provide a basis for agreement. If these efforts have not as yet proved successful, I would emphasize that this should not be regarded as an acceptance of defeat.

It is clear that the majority of the members of the Commission have been convinced that the proposals evolved in these three reports do provide the essential basis for the establishment of an effective system of international control of atomic energy. It is, in our view, appropriate that those who have been associated with developing these proposals through months of work should now submit the results of their efforts to the test of world opinion in a wider forum — namely in the General Assembly itself.

If the work of the Atomic Energy Commission is now to be suspended however, the challenge to the peoples of the world still remains to find a solution to the problem of the control of this new force, potentially so destructive to mankind if left uncontrolled. The essential facts of atomic energy are set out clearly in the various reports of the Commission. The great majority of the States represented on the Commission have been able to draw the same conclusions from these facts. Perhaps those who now disagree with us may yet come to share our view, and my Government earnestly hopes that this will be the case.

(b) The Question of Disarmament

Perhaps the most widely discussed resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations at its session in the autumn of 1946 related to the regulation and reduction of armaments and armed forces. I believe that it may be fairly said that few delegations to that session of the Assembly were more concerned in the drafting of this resolution than was the Canadian delegation. As a result of this resolution, the Security Council, February 3, 1947, took action to set up a Commission for Conventional Armaments which was to be a parallel body to the Atomic Energy Commission and to the Military Staff Committee.

The terms of reference of this Commission excluded atomic weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as these had been referred to the Atomic Energy Commission by the General Assembly and in the view of all members other than the Soviet it was most important that there should be no duplication of effort or responsibility. The term "conventional armaments" is held to include all other weapons and the Commission is also empowered to give consideration to the reduction of national armed forces. As in the case of the Atomic Energy Commission, however, the Commission for Conventional Armaments has so far reached no agreement on the matters which have been referred to it. It is not necessary to repeat all the reasons for this disagreement, but merely to say that the disagreements which have developed between the Soviet Union and the western world have their reflection in similar disagreements in the Atomic Energy Commission and in the Commission for Conventional Armaments. On the questions of drawing up essential safeguards necessary to ensure that the regulation of armaments is universally observed, and of establishing preliminary conditions of international confidence necessary to disarmament, the same disagreements between the Soviet Union and the West in the field of atomic energy have constantly repeated themselves in the Commission for Conventional Armaments. The position of the Canadian Government on these matters, as expressed in the Commission for Conventional Armaments, March 8, 1948, is that no agreement on the reduction of armaments and armed forces is likely to develop until conditions can be established which will make it unnecessary for nations to depend on national armaments solely for their security. We thus believe that the implementation of Article 43 of the Charter — in regard to the establishment of international armed forces — is an essential step which must first be taken if we are to reach an effective system for the regulation and reduction of national armaments and armed forces.

(c) The Implementation of Article 43 of the Charter

I would like to say a few more words, Mr. Chairman, in regard to Article 43 of the Charter, by which all members of the United Nations

are obligated to make available to the Security Council, on its call and in accordance with special agreements, armed forces "necessary for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security". As you know, Article 47 of the Charter calls for the establishment of a Military Staff Committee to advise and assist the Security Council on this matter. The Military Staff Committee, under the terms of Article 47(2) is to consist of the Chiefs of Staff of the five permanent members of the Security Council or of their representatives.

The Military Staff Committee has been meeting now for over two years and yet it has made no progress in the formulation of general agreements for the implementation of Article 43 of the Charter. The position of my Government on this failure of the Military Staff Committee to make progress was stated nearly two years ago by the Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, Mr. St. Laurent, in his opening speech in the General Assembly, October 29, 1946:

"We are particularly concerned that the Security Council and the Military Staff Committee have so far failed to make substantial progress towards a conclusion of the special agreements with individual members required to implement Articles 43 and those following of the Charter, and thus make armed forces and other facilities available to the Security Council. We are all of us bound under the Charter to refrain from using armed forces except as provided for by the Charter. The Government and people of Canada are anxious to know what armed forces, in common with other members of the United Nations, Canada should maintain as our share of the burden of putting world force behind world law. It is only when the special agreements with the Council have been concluded that we will be able to determine how large a proportion of the total annual production of our country can properly be devoted to improving the living conditions of the Canadian people. Canada therefore urges that the Security Council and the Military Staff Committee go ahead with all possible steps in the constructive work of negotiating the special agreements and of organizing the military and economic measures of enforcement."

As I have said this statement was made nearly two years ago, but still the Military Staff Committee has made no substantial progress. My Government is not a member of the Military Staff Committee (as the latter consists only of the five permanent members of the Security Council) and so we do not have first hand information of the disagreements which have lead to the present deadlock nor have we been very successful in obtaining answers to our enquiries. However, it is common knowledge that these disagreements largely concern the size and composition of the United Nations forces, the contributions which should be made by each State, particularly the Permanent members, the location of the United Nations forces and their right of access to the military bases of member nations. It is now evident that four of the five permanent members have for some time reached general agreement between themselves on the fundamental principles in this field; and that the failure of the Military Staff Committee to progress in its work is due very largely to the fact that the Soviet Union has consistently disagreed with the position taken by the other four permanent members.

(d) Regional Pacts for Collective Self-Defence under Article 51 of the Charter.

I have mentioned above in some detail the fact that the Atomic Energy Commission, the Commission for Conventional Armaments and the Military Staff Committee have not reached any final agreement on the subjects within their respective terms of reference. In view of this, it is not surprising that now, three years after the San Francisco

Conference, member nations are exploring other methods by which they might achieve mutual collective security. I would like briefly to refer to the position of my Government regarding Article 51 of the Charter which begins with the words "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence".

The position of the Canadian Government on this matter was made clear by our Prime Minister, March 17, 1948 when he commented on the Brussels Five-Power Treaty. He then said,

"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."

Ten months ago, at the General Assembly, one possible line of development in this field was outlined by Mr. St. Laurent. He then stated that it was not necessary to contemplate the break-up of the United Nations in order to build up a stronger security system within the United Nations. Without sacrificing the universality of the United Nations it is possible for the free nations of the world to form their own close association for collective self-defence under Article 51. Such an association could be created within the United Nations by those free states which are willing to accept more specific and onerous obligations than those contained in the Charter, in return for greater national security than the United Nations can now give its members.

Recently, on April 29, 1948, in a speech in the Canadian House of Commons, Mr. St. Laurent said, —

"Canada and the United States need the assistance of the Western European democracies just as they need ours. The spread of aggressive Communist despotism over Western Europe would ultimately almost certainly mean for us war, and war on most unfavourable terms. It is in our national interest to see to it that the flood of Communist expansion is held back. Our foreign policy today must, therefore, I suggest, be based on a recognition of the fact that totalitarian Communist aggression endangers the freedom and peace of every democratic country, including Canada. On this basis and pending the strengthening of the United Nations, we should be willing to associate ourselves with other free states in any appropriate collective security arrangements which may be worked out under Articles 51 or 52 of the Charter. In the circumstances of the present, the organization of collective defence in this way is the most effective guarantee of peace. The pursuit of this course, steadfastly, unprovocatively and constructively, is our best hope for disproving the gloomy predictions of inevitable war."

I would not think it necessary to add anything to this clear language used recently by our Secretary of State for External Affairs.

CONCLUSION

I have outlined the general policy of the Canadian Government towards the United Nations and have illustrated how this policy has been put into practice in regard to certain specific issues under the general heading of collective security. I would like to mention now certain basic principles which govern Canada's policy in external affairs and which reflect themselves in our participation in the United Nations.

In the first place, Canada is quick, of course, to recognize the limitations imposed upon us as a secondary power. I would like to quote again from the Gray lecture delivered by our Secretary of State for External Affairs in Toronto, January 13, 1947, —

"No society of nations can prosper if it does not have the support of those who hold a major share of the world's military and economic power. There is little point in a country of our stature recommending international action if those who must carry the major burden of whatever action is taken are not in sympathy."

Yet, although Canada must realistically recognize that our role in the United Nations is not a paramount one, it would be even less realistic to pretend that we have no influence. Canada has both the capacity and independence to press vigorously for the principles we believe in. Nor will they be casually dismissed. This has already been proven many times.

Secondly, Canada's Government, like all democratic governments, must frame its policy in such a way that it achieves general support from all sections of our people and not merely from special groups or interests. To quote once more from the Gray lecture, —

"A policy of world affairs, to be truly effective, must have its foundations laid upon general principles which have been tested in the life of the nation and which have secured the broad support of large groups of the population... No policy can be regarded as wise which divides the people whose effort and resources must put it into effect."

Considerations of national unity must, therefore, be a matter of primary concern in Canada's external policy — again as in the case of all other democratic states.

The third principle, I believe, which has been reflected in Canadian policy, is our conception of political liberty. We are all conscious of the danger to our own political institutions when freedom is attacked in other parts of the world. Consistently we have sought and found our friends among those of similar political traditions of liberty. This concern with political freedom leads inevitably to another fundamental principle of Canada's external policy — the rule of law in international affairs. In our own Canadian political system the supremacy of law is so familiar that we are perhaps inclined to take it for granted. Internationally we have, however, in recent times, witnessed a degree of lawlessness, the like of which has never previously afflicted the world. Yet, if we really believe in the principles of our own society, we must be governed by them in our international relations. If our experience tells us that the only healthy society is one in which the people give their consent to the laws by which they are governed, then we must work unceasingly for the acceptance of this rule of law in the international sphere. The Canadian Government has constantly followed this principle.

These are some of the broad principles which underlie Canada's external policy and which have reflected themselves in our participation