



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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An address given by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Hon. L.B. Pearson, on September 21, 1948, to the Ontario Municipal Association, Kingston, Ontario

This is my first public speech since I took the long and unusual jump from the Civil Service to politics. I am encouraged in making it, the speech, not the jump, by the knowledge that I am talking to men and women who also have accepted the responsibilities and the opportunities of public service.

The morning after I was honoured by being appointed to the Cabinet, I was asked by an American journalist in Ottawa how long I had been a Liberal. Somewhat to his amazement, I replied "Since last evening at 5 o'clock, when I was sworn in as a member of the Privy Council". Lest he should misunderstand me, I went on to explain that, until the moment I was sworn in, I had been a member of the Civil Service of Canada for 20 odd years, and that Civil Servants in Canada had no politics. Of course, the fact that I had joined a Liberal administration may have indicated to him that if I had not been a Civil Servant I might possibly have been a Liberal long before that 5 p.m. hour which I have just mentioned.

It is, I think, a healthy and indeed an essential condition that members of the Civil Service should be servants of the state and not servants of a Party. Without the whole-hearted acceptance of this fact, democratic government cannot be effective, honest and impartial, or likely to survive. We should do nothing in this country to make such acceptance difficult. In my own career, I have had the honour to serve both Conservative and Liberal Administrations, and I don't think I have ever been accused of not giving my best to either party while it was responsible for the government of our country. That is the way it should be and that, with very rare exceptions indeed, is the way it is in the Civil Service in Ottawa. It is one of the strong points in our governmental system. Because of my own experience and because of my own views on the matter, I have been reading with some interest certain newspaper comment on "politics in the Civil Service" which my recent change of status has inspired. So far as I am aware, certainly in the Department in which I have worked, politics do not enter the Civil Service and I would regret it very much if my resignation from that Service and my entry into the political service, should suggest that they do.

The Civil Service is an honourable and responsible career. If trained and qualified men cannot be attracted to it and remain satisfied in it, good government becomes very difficult indeed. That is why I hope we will not reach a position in Canada, which has been reached

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in certain other countries, where posts in the Civil Service are considered as the normal avenue of transition to political or private employment and are accepted for that purpose. In this connection, I heartily support the view expressed in a recent Ottawa editorial as follows:

"The line between the Cabinet and the Civil Servant must be sharp and clear, with the Civil Servant, like Caesar's wife, above suspicion - above suspicion that he is the political ally of the Government. Once blur that line, once give the public or the official opposition the suspicion that the Civil Service may not be neutral, or that some of its members in high places may be using their position to promote political careers, currying favour with the Government in the process, and may we not then be on the way of risking Civil Service continuity?"

That view is, I suggest, very wise. I agree with it, all the more so because I can assert with a very clear conscience that I have always tried to act in accordance with it while I was a government official.

Having said so much, however, I am bound to go further and express my own opinion that a Civil Servant, who is also a citizen, is entitled to the privilege that every other Canadian citizen has, of resigning from his job, and attempting to serve his country by entering the House of Commons as an elected representative of the people. I can assure you, from my own experience, that the satisfaction and security of the Civil Service are such that not many senior officials are likely to yield to this temptation. But I hope, when it does happen, and it certainly happens very rarely, that neither the motives of the person concerned, if he has been an honest Civil Servant, nor the high and impartial standing of the Civil Service itself will be questioned.

As one official who has taken the plunge, as one who has recently left the ranks of those who are too often referred to as "power-hungry bureaucrats", I can now, without misunderstanding, put in a good word for the members of the "bureaucracy", who are so often the victims of criticism which they themselves cannot answer because of their Civil Service status.

I ought to know something about bureaucrats, because I have been one myself and have seen others in action in a good many countries of the world. There is, of course, always a danger that some official, not responsible to the electorate or answerable directly to Parliament, may overstep the bounds of what should be permitted in a democratic state. The danger is greater in this day of complicated political, economic and social problems, where the knowledge and experience of the expert is more important than ever before and where the Minister cannot hope to be automatically informed about all the problems that come up. There might develop a tendency, indeed in some places there has developed a tendency, for Parliament and responsible Ministries to abdicate in favour of the skilled official. That tendency should, of course, be resisted, or it will mean the end of responsible government. I have never myself spoken of this matter to any responsible official of the government in Ottawa who has not agreed with me. Indeed, the best protection of the official in the exercise of his proper authority, is a healthy and vigorous, responsible Ministry and Parliament, supervising and controlling his actions and laying down the principles and policies which are to govern them. I can, however, understand the impatience

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and irritation of over-worked and underpaid Civil Servants in Ottawa who, in carrying out to the best of their abilities the instructions of the government of the day, are criticized and sneered at and made responsible in the eyes of public opinion for acts for which they have no constitutional responsibility.

There never was a time in history when the expert, and the official, on one hand, and the political representative, the Member of Parliament and the Cabinet Minister, on the other, should work more closely and more cooperatively together than at present. Only with such close cooperation can democratic government survive.

Another reason why the bureaucrat, and indeed, often the Minister, is subject to criticism is that he is supposed to spend most of his business hours, which are thought to be two or three a day, in winding and unwinding red tape.

Well, as one who has been concerned over the years with the ham-stringing effect of red tape, I can certainly sympathize with that feeling. But I have also learned that, at times, there is one thing even more delaying and destructive than red tape; that is misguided and premature efforts to cut across wise and well established procedures. You can, I suppose, get more toothpaste more quickly by squeezing the top of the tube; but it is not a procedure that I would recommend. The result is messy and wasteful. On the other hand, you can go too far to the other extreme, in observing all the fussy niceties and formalities of official procedures. I hope, for instance, that my own Department will never become strangled with its own paper regulations. I recall the feeling during the war of a rebellious staff-officer friend of mine. It was during the grim days of September 1940 in London and I expressed some natural anxiety about the future. He cheered me up by replying "Don't worry, we'll win the war alright, if the supply of carbon paper holds out".

In no field of political activity is the necessity for cooperation between the expert official and the peoples' representatives greater than in that of external affairs. I feel strongly that to protect Canada's interests in this field and reconcile those interests with those of other free democratic peoples, it is necessary to find and keep the best trained minds we can secure. It is short-sighted and foolish to think that whereas we need skilled men for building a post office or paving a highway, the business of diplomacy and international relations can be left to anybody. That feeling, where it exists, springs, I think, from the view that whereas a post office or a road has an immediate importance, a conference at Geneva or Lake Success is a matter which has little to do with anybody but the "striped pants boys" who are conducting it. Believe me, such a view is profoundly wrong. For Canada, bruised by two world wars and one world depression, decisions taken in far-away places have a vital importance for the village square. There is no escaping today the results and the obligations that flow from the interdependence of nations. In my new job, therefore, I shall do my best to convince those of my fellow Canadians who need convincing that external affairs are really domestic affairs; that foreign policy is, as it has been wittily put, domestic policy with its hat on, and concerns the welfare, indeed the very existence of every man, woman and child in the country.

I believe also that Canada's external affairs should, to the greatest possible extent, though always subject to the legitimate requirements of responsible government, be kept on a non-partisan basis.

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After all, we are all Canadians, or should be, before we are Liberals, Conservatives or C.C.F.; before we are Quebeckers or Manitobans. So we should aim to face the outside world with a united front. Politics, it has been said by an American leader, should end at the water's edge.

Among the international problems facing us at this grave and depressing moment of post war history, by far the most important, before which every other problem pales into insignificance, is the prevention of a third world war. We hoped at San Francisco that we had found an agency for this purpose in the United Nations. The hopes of those days have begun to vanish as the world divides into two opposing and unfriendly camps; the free, democratic nations on one side, the reactionary communist despotisms on the other. In the face of this division, which colours and confuses every matter brought before the United Nations, from the status of women to the status of Jerusalem, our world organization has been weakened, in political questions, to the point of impotence.

Therefore we must regard with sombre realism, but without despair, the future of UN; a future which will be greatly affected for good or evil, by what happens at the United Nations Assembly which opened in Paris this afternoon.

The deliberations and decisions of this Assembly - and even more the outcome of the discussions between the great powers over Berlin - will, I think, largely determine whether the two worlds - democratic and communist - can cooperate on a basis of mutual toleration, at least; or whether they will continue to face each other with fear, suspicion and ill-will; if the latter, is there any hope for our security for peace in and through the United Nations?

If not, should we then scrap the United Nations? No, because, with all its faults and frustrations, it remains the only forum that exists for the expression of the world's conscience; because it has made already important contributions to man's welfare; because it is our only mechanism for universal international intercourse.

The fact, however, that the United Nations cannot guarantee our security does not mean that we need sit idly by and watch collective safety vanish. Inside the United Nations and within the terms of its Charter we can form regional security groups, the members of which will accept and carry out certain obligations for collective defence in the interest of their individual security.

Mr. St. Laurent, then Secretary of State for External Affairs, in his address at Toronto on June 11 of this year, said:

"Victory in war requires a pooling of risks and a pooling of resources. Victory over war requires a similar pooling by the Free Nations. Such a pooling cannot take place unless we realize that the giving of aid to an ally is not charity but self-help.

"We know that, divided, the Free Nations may fall, one by one, before the forces of totalitarian tyranny working within and without their borders, but that, united, they can preserve freedom and peace for all. Let us be not only willing but anxious to unite."

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I want to develop this point a bit. The Canadian Government has made it clear that it is not only willing, but anxious, to join the other North Atlantic democracies in establishing a regional collective security pact for the North Atlantic.

We believe that the maintenance of an overwhelming superiority of force on the side of peace is the best guarantee today of the maintenance of peace.

As you know, representatives of the Canadian Government have been participating for over two months now in informal and exploratory discussions in Washington on the problems of security raised in the Vandenberg Resolution. These discussions have taken place between representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Benelux countries and Canada.

All the governments concerned have agreed that no information about these discussions will be made public until a decision is reached.

It is not, therefore, possible for me to tell you today how these discussions are going. I can, however, say that the Canadian Government has every reason to believe that the discussions will be fruitful; that Canada is playing a useful part in them.

The Canadian Government has also, since the end of July, had an observer present at the discussions in London of the Military Committee of the Brussels Powers - the United Kingdom, France and Benelux. The United States has also had observers present at these meetings. The reports of this Military Committee go to the Chiefs of Staff of the Brussels Treaty Powers and from them to the Defence Ministers of those five powers.

The Canadian Government has taken these steps towards the creation of an effective regional security system with, I am sure, the overwhelming support of the people of Canada. The people of Canada have given this support knowing that Canada's participation in such a security system may require that, in an emergency, we share not only our risks but our resources. It would, for instance, be the task of a North Atlantic security system, once it is established, to agree upon a fair allocation of duties among the participating countries, under which each will undertake to do that share of the joint defence and production job that it can do most efficiently.

Such a sharing of risks, resources and obligations must, however, be accompanied by, and flow from a share in the control of policy. If obligations and resources are to be shared, it is obvious that some sort of constitutional machinery must be established under which each participating country will have a fair share in determining the policies of all which affect all. Otherwise, without their consent, the policy of one or two or three may increase the risks and therefore the obligations of all.

This does not necessarily mean that every member of a regional security pact need be represented on all levels in all organs of the regional organization. To insist on this would make some of the organs unworkable. But it does mean that every organ of the regional security organization will derive its powers from a constitutional grant of those powers to it by all the members of the organization.

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During the last war our three great allies - the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union - reserved to themselves the sole right to make the big strategic and political decisions of the war. It was the two great Western powers, and not all the Western belligerents, which appointed, for instance, the supreme Commanders in Chief. That arrogation of power by the United Kingdom and the United States may have been necessary during the critical emergency of war, especially as before the war no steps had been taken to organize for collective defence. However, it might be argued on the other hand that, even during the war, the total military, economic and moral strength of the alliance against Germany and Japan would have been greater if there had been a constitutional system under which each of the allies had a fair share in the determination of policy and under which the organs of the alliance were created by the allies as a whole and owed their authority to the allies as a whole.

In any event, I feel sure that it would not be possible in any effective peacetime organization of collective security to accept the procedures which were adopted in the war-time organization of the grand alliance.

It is, for instance, one thing for a group of states to accept common responsibilities, each taking its fair share in discharging them, and indeed, in adding or subtracting from them. It is, however, quite a different thing for one, two, or three states to make decisions which may have far-reaching consequences for all countries and all peoples, and then, one, two, or three of them ask other countries to jump in and help in solving the problems which those decisions have raised. There are times no doubt, when the requirements for consultation and for co-operative decisions must be subordinated to the necessities of a grave emergency. But those occasions must be reduced to a minimum, before there can be any genuine collective action. That is one reason why I hope that the North Atlantic Regional System for security and progress will soon be formed so that within its framework the decisions which affect all will be taken by all. Only then will the common responsibility for carrying out those decisions be clear and unequivocal.

Canada is facing today the necessity of making grave decisions on its political and military relations with the other North Atlantic democracies. Canada is also facing the necessity of making decisions concerning its financial and economic relations with the United Kingdom and the other North Atlantic democracies. These decisions cannot wisely be considered in isolation from each other.

Each of the specific questions which arises is neither purely economic, nor purely military nor purely strategic. In making decisions on any one of the related questions, it is necessary to weigh the political, economic, strategic and psychological factors.

If the decision is to be a wise one, it must therefore follow a very careful balancing of such political, economic, strategic and psychological factors. All of these factors are difficult to calculate; many of them are intangible.

The problems also involve a weighing of short run against long run considerations. In the short run, certain decisions may be preferable to others either because they do not disturb an economy too much or because they produce results immediately. However, these decisions, though preferable if one is looking forward only one or two years, may not be as beneficial as other possible decisions if one is looking forward five, six or seven years.

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The purpose of balancing the various kinds of factors - short run and long run, political, economic, strategic and psychological - is to arrive at a policy which will best serve the interests of the people of Canada.

But the interests of the people of Canada cannot be considered in isolation from the interests of the peoples of the other North Atlantic democracies - nor can their interests be considered in isolation from ours.

The only course of realism today for the North Atlantic democracies is for each of them to consider problems arising out of their relations with one another as problems between friends and associates. This does not mean that each of us should do everything that any other member of the group says is in the interests of the whole association. It does, however, mean that each of us, before taking action in the political, economic or military field, must consider what the effect of its action will be on the total strength of the group as a whole - its total military, economic and moral strength.

Each of us must make these decisions, realizing that, though war is by no means inevitable, there is a risk that war may break out at any time. The extent of this risk is incalculable, but its existence cannot be denied. It is greater today probably than at any time since the war ended a short three years ago.

That, gentlemen, is a depressing statement to make. It is, however, based, I think, on a sober appreciation of the facts and the trends of today. You would not wish me to preach a doctrine of sweetness and light when I do not feel that way. Nor, on the other hand, do I feel that we need fall into despair and assume that nothing can be done to save the situation. Not at all. There is nothing inevitable in the relations between states; nothing fixed or frozen or permanent.

Living, however, as we will in the years ahead, in an atmosphere of international tension, punctuated by recurrent crises, we and our friends in the other Western democracies will need steady nerves and stout hearts. We will need to be unshaken in our determination to pursue a consistent, firm and unprovocative policy against any power or group of powers which threaten by direct or indirect means the world's peace. In the pursuit of such a policy lies our best hope for the future.