

GOVERNMENT  
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# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
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No. 51/34 THE OTTAWA MEETING OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL

A statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson, broadcast over the Trans-Canada network of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, September 21, 1951.

The North Atlantic Council has finished its Ottawa work and the Centre Block of the Parliament Buildings has returned to its between-session peace and calm. Tourists can again wander around without security passes, and the delegates and advisers of the eleven visiting governments are on their way home.

So much has been said already about this meeting that I am wondering what I can usefully add. It was a good meeting and its results were all that we could have expected. There was one very important concrete decision taken, but many other steps were taken, the importance of which will not become apparent for some time. After all, these Council meetings are now as regular and normal as sessions of Parliament, and we should not expect dramatic, headline decisions every time we gather together. So though this session may not have been a spectacular one it was a valuable one in the best tradition of international democracy and much good work was done.

During these five days we looked at the world through bifocal lenses. For most of the time we have been examining the urgent defence problems near at hand. They are, of course, and must be, our first concern for if we don't solve them we may not have any peaceful, more distant plans to worry about. However, during part of our session we ventured to look also at the remoter future, with all its hopes and possibilities; and we considered what steps could be taken to make that a better future by furthering the development of the North Atlantic community in a way which would promote the welfare of all its peoples.

The North Atlantic Organization has already had great success since the Treaty was signed more than two years ago. During that time we have learned that if the aggressive forces of Communist imperialism are to be held in check, our collective defences in the North Atlantic area must be strong. If the Communists now attack this growing strength as provocative, they do so merely to deceive and divide us, because our strength and unity is their greatest fear. We know that to Soviet Russia, whatever its propagandists may say, not our strength, but our weakness, is the greatest provocation.

So we are getting stronger. In a few months General Eisenhower's Atlantic force will form a far from weak shield against aggression. Canada, as you know, has been asked to provide a brigade group and eleven air squadrons for that force and measures have been taken to ensure that that commitment is honoured.

Not only are strong forces being built up for the defence of the North Atlantic area, but co-ordinated military plans have been agreed on. Those plans will be realized more effectively and more speedily because of the meeting we have just concluded. Although Western Europe, then, remains the great fortress of freedom, there are other areas which are of great strategic importance, and which must be joined to that area, for the purposes of defence, if we are to succeed in convincing the Soviet Union that the free world cannot be attacked with impunity. For that reason a decision was taken at this meeting of the North Atlantic Council - an important decision - to recommend to our governments and parliaments that Greece and Turkey - the south flank of the Atlantic community - should be admitted as full members of the Organization. Our House of Commons will soon be asked to approve that decision.

The purpose of this action, and of every other decision we have taken - we can never stress this too much - is to prevent war. Not one of the countries represented on the North Atlantic Council has succumbed to the fatalistic fallacy that war is inevitable or to the view that any activity which does not lead to an immediate increase in military strength is irrelevant and unnecessary in the present state of the world. We must keep it that way.

Convincing proof of the peaceful intention of our alliance is found in the fact that during these past few days in Ottawa we have devoted many hours to a serious and heartening discussion of the non-military aspects of the Treaty. This marks, I think, an historic turning point in its development. There is much still to be done in building up our joint military forces before we can feel any sense of security against the menace of Soviet Communist aggression. But we can, I think, safely permit ourselves now to give some thought also to the more distant future.

To build the North Atlantic community, as we are now pledged to do, will not be a short or easy task. It will be many, many decades before we finish that job - and it cannot be done by airy phrases. But we begin with great advantages. The development we are projecting will be no artificial process. It will be the natural growth of something that exists at present. Already, there is a strong and growing sense of community between the North Atlantic nations. What we are now proposing is to see how this can be progressively and practicably developed in a way which will promote the welfare of our peoples.

There is, of course, a relationship between the short-term and long-term objectives of NATO, apart from the fact that if we do not achieve the former there may not be any of the latter. The most immediately pressing problem is the actual collection of adequate defensive strength. But allied to that is how this burden of defence is to be

shared. When the sacrifices that are involved in a common effort are shared as fairly as is possible in this imperfect world, the community gains strength which enables it to go forward and solve new problems.

But defence, as such, is not the only burden. The European delegates, coming from countries still not fully recovered from the losses and destruction of the last war, have been reminding us that a corollary problem is, how to share the burden of existence. The necessity for increased defence production has already caused sharp economic difficulties in all the North Atlantic countries - in some more than in others; and these difficulties would certainly be aggravated if it were to be found that the tempo of rearmament had to be accelerated still further. The weapons needed by a modern army are today so elaborate, so costly, that few, if any, countries nowadays can rearm without co-operation from other friendly states. Those of us who were soldiers will remember how difficult it is to get into full kit by oneself. Someone has to help you get the pack over your shoulders and adjust it on your back. That is what has to happen now if the North Atlantic countries are as quickly as possible to be ready to defend themselves. So, this week in Ottawa, we discussed, as our main topic, this problem of co-operation in the fields of defence production and defence finance and we made arrangements for these discussions to be carried further before the next meeting later this fall in Rome. At that meeting some fundamental decisions will have to be taken on how to match our economic resources with our defence needs.

The degree of success that we attain in defence co-operation may largely determine the progress we can make in promoting the growth, generally, of the North Atlantic community. But the time has come to look even further into the future to a period when the problems of defence will not loom so large as they do today and when defence burdens, we may hope, will be lighter. Accordingly, a committee of Ministers - of which Canada is to supply the Chairman - was set up at this Council meeting to examine the possibilities of closer economic, financial and social co-operation on a permanent basis. This committee will also investigate what should be done to produce the maximum amount of coordination between the foreign policies of the various North Atlantic countries and to facilitate the flow of information and of ideas among them.

Although this developing Atlantic community, of necessity, must have a certain geographical basis, it is conceived in no exclusive or selfish spirit. It recognizes no arbitrary bounds, for it is the defensive core of the whole free world. Many other peoples share its aspirations; and it would be folly to weaken in any way the ties - commercial, sentimental, political - that its members have with other free countries.

The gates of the North Atlantic community should, I think, be kept open even towards those who would now destroy it. I don't want to be misunderstood in saying this. I know that the menace of Soviet military power is so great that we cannot slacken in the work of building collective defences. That feeling underlay all our talk

at our Council meeting. We agreed also that we should be very wary of false peace campaigns intended to weaken and divide us. On the other hand, we were equally convinced that we should never reject any genuine move for "peace"; that we should test each move by the deeds that follow it; that we must not seal ourselves off from the Soviet Union and its satellites since, ultimately, our way of life may even succeed in penetrating the isolation in which the Russian people have been placed by their Government.

That possibility, distant though it may be, is another reason why we must be careful about the quality of our own institutions and our own way of life. We have a responsibility to the future and to humanity to make sure in the North Atlantic community that our dealings with one another and with the rest of the world are marked by justice, tolerance and charity. If we can discharge that responsibility while at the same time building up energetically our defences, we will have the right to hope that the angels which men have seen always through anguish and turmoil will hover over the ramparts we are building. We may then also pray that Providence in its own good time will bring in a world where those ramparts can be dismantled, and where peace will prevail.

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