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CANADA'S INTERNATIONAL SITUATION
AND POINT OF VIEW

Text of an address by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada, opening the Town Hall Forum "Canada - Nation on the March", on March 3, 1953, in New York City.

It is always a pleasure for me to visit Town Hall. Its very name evokes nostalgic memories of an earlier and more tranquil day when across Canada and the United States Town Hall meetings were in a very real sense the cradles of democracy. Freedom of discussion and debate, the honest exchange of conflicting ideas and argument - these things which we cherish were born of such meetings.

Since those days the democratic community has immeasurably increased in size and complexity. This is one reason why the importance of freedom of thought and discussion is greater than ever before. Therefore I welcome the change of helping to initiate this series of talks on Canada, which has been planned (like so many other projects in which our two countries are concerned) as a co-operative venture on the part of public spirited men from both sides of the border.

I speak to you today as the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs and not, I hasten to add, as President of the United Nations General Assembly. As a Canadian may I say that I think you have chosen a good and timely subject, if a somewhat all-embracing one. No two countries are more closely concerned with each other's affairs than Canada and the United States. Our people should know and learn all they can about each other, both in this Town Hall, and outside it.

In some parts of the world where smaller countries lie next to more powerful neighbours, the dominant keynote is fear and subordination. In North America, it is friendship and confidence, founded on a free and fruitful association. Proximity arising from the facts of politics and geography can often breed mistrust. In the case of our two peoples, it has bred deep and mutual respect. Proximity does not for us mean the imposed leadership of the master or the enforced obedience of the reluctant satellite. It means a partnership, based on consultation and cooperation, and it includes the right to agree - or to disagree.

This tradition of the good neighbour derives not merely from the fact that we are the joint occupants of a continent endowed with great material resources and developed by the industry and spirit of Canadians and Americans. Nor is it due only to the fact that we know - and act on the knowledge - that our defence recognizes no national boundaries; that it lies in collective measures shared with our neighbours and our friends, and in the pledges we have made - and which we are honouring - as members of the United Nations.

The sources of our good neighbourhood lie deeper. They are found in the faith which illuminates our search for the security and the welfare of our own peoples, and of others as well; in respect for freedom, and for the rights and dignity of individual men and women.

Representing the smaller partner in our association, I have been asked to talk to you about "Canada's international situation". The "personal columns" in our newspapers often speak of "situation wanted". Sometimes, in international affairs we find ourselves in situations which no one in their right mind could possibly want. The international situation in which Canadians find themselves, like that facing other people, is only partly the product of what we are and what we want. Much of it is ready-made for us by the hard and sometimes bitter facts of international life.

Canada is a North American nation in a British Commonwealth; made up of peoples as old - and as new - as any of this continent; with a varied and expanding economy; and with inherited traditions of political liberty and respect for the rule of law. All these elements are reflected in our attitudes towards other peoples, and in the policies we advocate and support in our relations with them.

There is something else, however, an awareness of the importance to us of the policies of other states. Our whole history tells us that events far from Canadian borders can transform overnight our lives and our destinies; can re-shape the whole pattern of our economy, our daily ways of life and work. We Canadians know from hard experience that we cannot dodge the impact of world events. Sentiment, derived from an unbroken political association with the United Kingdom and a continued contact with France, reinforces and underlines this knowledge.

...Our first interest is in peace. To seek and secure this is the primary obligation on any government of Canada. This is natural, for we have - apart from the Korean conflict - been at war for 10 years since 1914.

The realization of this desire for peace and security, we know depends on a recognition of its vital and equal importance by others. We accept the reality of inter-dependence in a shrinking world. Peace for us means that there must be peace in the international community.

A second national concern - closely tied to international developments - is the welfare and the prosperity of our people which is inseparable from the welfare and prosperity of others.

Canada is a country which, to an unparalleled extent, is dependent on world trade for the livelihood of our people. Our trade links with the United States, the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, with Western Europe and with the rest of the world, both for necessary imports and as markets for our exports, gives us a vital stake in a high and increasing level of world trade, second to no other country in the world, and in world prosperity which, like peace, is indivisible.

A third concern, less tangible than peace and economic well-being, but no less important, is our deep attachment to certain principles rooted in our history and in our experience as Canadians.

What then are these fundamental principles which so largely determine the conduct of foreign policy in Canada?

1. National unity:

No policy can be regarded as wise which divides the people whose effort and resources must put it into effect. This applies not only to the two main cultural groups in our country; it applies equally to sectionalism of any kind. For Canada disunity means impotence. Its possibility is always an immediate and intense pre-occupation with any Canadian Government conscious of the facts of our geography, history and of our racial and federal structure.

2. Political Liberty:

We value political freedom as something beyond price. So we are conscious of the danger to our own political institutions when freedom is attacked in other parts of the world. From our democratic inheritance, and from our own experience, we have come as people to dislike and distrust governments which rule by force and suppress freedom. We seek - and find - our friends among those of like political traditions. And we recognize that a threat to the liberty of peoples elsewhere is a threat to our liberties at home.

3. The Rule of Law in National and International Affairs:

Respect for the rule of law, both in our own country, and in the relations we wish to see established between the states of the international community, is for us a cardinal principle. This is one of the elements in our national attitude towards totalitarian countries - whether of left or right - where the government sets itself above the law. It also explains the support we give to strengthening the procedures of law and justice in the international community.

4. The Importance of Moral Values:

In our national life and in our participation in world affairs, we are deeply conscious of the moral values which we have inherited from older civilizations. This is the basis of the emphasis which we give to the importance of the individual personality in the conduct of human relations.

5. Acceptance of responsibility in keeping with our conception of our role in world affairs:

Our experience has shown us that our security depends upon the development of a successfully functioning international organization. So we are prepared to play our full part in associations and organizations which serve the world, within our capacities and our resources.

These are the principles which influence, and largely determine our point of view on world affairs. Our experience in two world wars - and their aftermath - has confirmed our belief in their validity.

In August 1914, Canada was a young country on the eve of great developments, with a population only half of what it is today. After four years of what was called the First Great War, 60,000 of our youth were left on the battlefields of France and of Flanders. That experience remains an abiding memory, but at first we did not draw the right conclusions from it.

After the first war, many of us pinned our hopes for peace on the newly-founded League of Nations, without showing any great zeal in taking measures necessary to realize these hopes. Governments - including the Canadian Government - were not prepared to use collective force to deter aggression at the point when and where it might have been stopped. So, by September 1939 there was no way to stop Hitler's Germany short of a total war based on old conceptions of national defence and improvised national alliances.

In the six years of total war which followed - in that war for which we did not find a name - merely a number - 42,000 Canadians lost their lives. The monetary cost to Canada's 12 million people was in the neighbourhood of 20 billion dollars.

But in these second war and post-war years, all of us learned some lessons of great importance about peace. We learned that peace could not be achieved by leaving the job of securing it to others; by refusing to make commitments in advance; or by shutting our eyes to the reality of the threat of force designed to achieve world domination. Above all, we learned that, in the face of a determined aggressor, to be weak is to invite disaster, and to be alone is to ensure defeat.

So in 1945, from the rubble and destruction of World War Two, there emerged a great hope and a great principle. The hope was that through the United Nations we might succeed, in the words of the Charter, "in saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind."

Canada's support for the United Nations at that time and our support now is based on the principle that aggression could only be prevented or defeated through the organization of collective security. That principle was right then, and it is right today. But we - and others - were gradually forced, through our experience of the events of 1945, '46 and '47, to recognize that the unanimity of the Great Powers on which the prospect of collective security through United Nations action was originally planned had yielded to mistrust and deep hostility. Instead of the peace for which we so earnestly hoped, we felt the icy breath of the "cold war."

So we were compelled by events to organize the collective security envisaged under the Charter through other, more limited agencies, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In company with other free states in the Atlantic community and elsewhere, and in response to the threat we felt, Canada decided to increase and to pool its defence effort, and to assume, in advance, far-reaching and precise commitments for collective defence and security.

Then in June 1950, the aggression in Korea exposed the global nature of the threat to us all. When it broke on an almost unsuspecting world, the United Nations reacted with a speed and vigour which heartened its friends and confounded its critics. The Korean aggression placed a large sector of the free world on the alert. It showed the immensity of the challenge. It exposed the nature of the forces - both physical and psychological - which the free world faced, and the vast dimensions of the struggle in which our generation was engaged.

...So forces from Canada, and other Members of the United Nations moved to the scene of battle alongside their comrades from the United States, who, along with the free Koreans, bore, and continue to bear, the brunt of the struggle.

These events across the Pacific had an immediate effect on NATO planning in Europe. Effective forces and equipment were stationed in increasing numbers on the frontiers where history and experience have convinced us the main immediate danger still lies.

They are there for one reason only - to deter or to resist aggression and to make peace possible. Canadians - almost without exception - approve of our own participation in this effort.

The price Canadians are paying for the maintenance of our growing defences - at home and abroad - is - for a nation of 14 millions - substantial. In 1939 we were spending only about 38 million dollars for defence. This year we are spending more than two billion dollars - or in terms of the total national income of the United States - the equivalent of about 38 billion dollars.

And since the war, we have given assistance to our friends in the form of grants, figts, or credits equivalent in terms of your national income to nearly forty billions of dollars.

Both in Europe and in Korea, Canada is bearing its own substantial share of the common burden. The Canadian contribution may be small measured in absolute terms compared with the huge effort of the United States. But no country in the world of our size and position is doing more in practical terms to fulfil its international obligations and responsibilities, and we are doing it at a time when the development of new resources presents us with a new and great challenge and takes up much of our energy and our strength.

We feel this effort is necessary because, at this point in the middle of the twentieth century, Canada sees - across the Atlantic and the Pacific - an international picture full of tension and potential danger, coming to sharp focus in Asia, where actual fighting is going on. The search for peace dominates our national consciousness. It is a search which can only end in success - (and this is true even for the most powerful of states) - if it is undertaken jointly with others, and if all who share in it are equipped for the task - not merely with weapons, but with understanding and vision and steadfastness.

In my remarks I have mentioned three of the most important of the associations to which Canada belongs: the Commonwealth, NATO, the United Nations. Each of these has its distinctive contribution to make to the outcome of this search.

THE COMMONWEALTH

This uncommon - indeed unique - association of free and independent states is rooted deep in our history. In the contemporary world, it has an importance and a value which no one should underestimate in adding up the resources of the free world.

Unlike the United Nations, unlike NATO, the Commonwealth has no formal machinery, no treaty binding its members, no specific commitments. In its very freedom - and in its diversity - lie its power and the influence which it can wield for good in the world today. The sovereign countries of the Commonwealth are found in every continent, and contain vast populations, with people of every race. This changing Commonwealth, which links free Asia with the Free West, has proved its vigour and usefulness, not only to its own members but to the world, by its capacity for solving practical problems and for adapting its outward forms to meet new needs.

The modern Commonwealth is no narrow group aiming to improve its position at the expense of others. It is a widely representative association, aware of the great range of conditions throughout most of the world, seeking to find some basis on which national actions can be taken in the light of the needs of international co-operation; linking together Asia and the West when links of this kind are so sorely needed.

NATO

Then there is NATO. Canada looks to NATO as the shield of its own defence in Europe and the Atlantic area, and as the nucleus of a community of peace-loving Atlantic states co-operating for the common good. NATO threatens no one, for none of its members has aggressive intentions. Its purpose is to reduce fear and tension in the face of threats and provocation. Whatever has been achieved to this end in Europe since 1949 is due to the determination of the United States and the other members of the NATO coalition to build and to maintain a powerful deterrent force against aggression in free Europe.

That deterrent force is being built and will be maintained so long as it is necessary. As our contribution to it, since the autumn of 1951, the 27th Canadian Infantry Brigade has been stationed in Western Europe. Twenty-four ships of the Canadian Navy have been made available to the Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic. These will be increased until by 1954 they will number 52. Twelve jet-fighter squadrons of the Royal Canadian Air Force - an Air Division - part of which is already overseas - will be stationed in Europe by next year.

We are also making a substantial contribution to NATO in the form of mutual aid to our allies and partners. Increasing amounts have been made available in each budget since September 1950, and the appropriation for the current financial year amounts to about 325 million dollars. These appropriations provide for transfers of equipment, the training of air crew of our other NATO partners, and other material aid where it is needed.

NATO, however, is more than a military alliance against aggression. While it came into being because it was found that the United Nations was powerless at that time to provide the security we sought, it rests on foundations more durable than military strength alone. The force which unites the communities of the North Atlantic area is not only a common danger; it is also a common history and a common tradition of freedom. To achieve our aims, economic and political stability must co-exist with military strength, for military strength bought at the expense of economic or political stability is illusory.

Thus, from the outset, Canadian policy has aimed at ensuring that NATO should promote co-operation and progress in areas outside the purely military sphere. Progress in these areas has been disappointingly slow. We hope that it is, however, sure. We realize that it must grow from within, and cannot, with success, be forced into any pre-conceived pattern. Its existence will not necessarily be hastened by the establishment of new machinery or institutions for carrying out what we may be able, even now, to recognize as the ultimate scope of the Atlantic community. Progress will depend upon the growth of mutual confidence and understanding, rather than on procedures or committees. But progress in this field there must be, if NATO is to survive the emergency which gave it birth. ...

In Canada, we have not forgotten that we share with the United States and fifty-eight other countries common membership in the United Nations. We continue to support the aims and purposes inscribed in its Charter.

The principles of general collective security - and general collective welfare - remain the basis of our foreign policy. We are convinced - Korea is the proof, - that aggression in any part of the world constitutes, in the long run, a threat to every other part. Our acceptance of this principle, however - or at any rate its application in practice - is qualified, as are so many things, by the available resources of the free world. To say we must use judgment in deciding how the collective security obligations of the Charter can best be discharged does not mean that we can turn a blind eye to any act of aggression. It does mean, however, that those who share the responsibility of defending the free world must exercise the highest qualities of patience, intelligence, and conscience, in deciding where and how the limited forces at our disposal should be applied.

But while we must recognize that collective action to meet aggression may have to vary according to circumstances, the collective response to aggression in Korea, and the adoption of the Uniting for Peace resolution of November 1950, are evidence of the growing determination of the majority of members of the United Nations to work towards the achievement of the kind of collective security envisaged in the Charter. As an evidence of our own faith, nearly 20,000 Canadians have seen service, on land, on sea and in the air, in the Korean area of operations.

The United Nations is also an agency of proven usefulness for the conciliation of political disputes, as well as for the organization of collective action against established aggression. We support it for this reason and also because it provides, with its Specialized Agencies, numerous opportunities for international cooperation in almost every form of economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian endeavour. It is an agency with important responsibilities for supervising the evolution to self-government of many peoples now living in dependent status.

Above all it is a world forum which gives its members - on both sides of the Great Divide - an organized means of negotiation and conciliation when the time and the nations are ripe for it, and when there are tangible indications that the will to seek peaceful solution exists.

The recent United Nations resolution on Korea united 54 nations of every continent, and illustrated in dramatic fashion the unique role which the United Nations can play in bridging differences between countries who share a common purpose. In other fields, equally relevant to the securing of peace in the long run - in the fields of technical, economic and social co-operation, - work of lasting value has also been done. Efforts have steadily been made, in United Nations and related programmes, to bridge the technological gulf between countries which received the greatest material gains from the advances of the industrial and scientific revolution, and their less developed neighbours in the world community; to increase world levels of food and industrial production; to eradicate or reduce disease and illiteracy; and to increase man's powers over nature over a widening area of the globe. Like defence, such programmes - to which Canada has fully contributed - cost money. But they are a venture not in charity but in self-help and mutual aid; and they provide reciprocal benefits to the participants whether they be givers or receivers of aid; they give grounds for rational hope and faith to millions of people.

It will be seen that in the world situation in which Canadians find themselves, this peace which we seek, is compounded - like things that are durable - of diverse elements. For us, peace is not an uneasy pause between bouts of localized aggression, nor a slow retreat in the face of brute force. If that is what the Communist world means by "co-existence", there would be little point, - for us - in "co-existing". We do not seek merely "peace in our time"; but in the time of generations whose future is now in our hands. And above all, it must be peace on terms which free men can respect; not the "peace" of the concentration camp.

The United Nations - NATO - the Commonwealth; in each, Canada participates and expresses its point of view; each moulds and influences Canada's foreign policy. In the minds of Canadians there is no conflict in our obligations to these organizations and associations since they seek a common purpose. This common purpose is the achievement of a progressive and peaceful world community in which freedom reigns. We are under no illusion that the achievement of this purpose will be anything but a slow and laborious

process. We know that we shall at times find it difficult to keep our distant goal in sight.

Today, Canada looks out on the world, with anxiety, but also with confidence - a confidence based on the progress made thus far in the search for peace through international co-operation; on the strength and on the fundamental wisdom of the nations with which her destiny is so closely linked; and on the faith that in collective action under the leadership of a powerful and peaceful United States of America lies the best hope for the future of the world community of which we are a part.

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