

CANADA AND A FOREIGN POLICY

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1. *Day Dreams.*

IN deciding whether to have a foreign policy, Canada is faced with a problem rather like that of a young woman of independent means who has to decide whether to prepare herself for a professional career. The career (like the foreign policy) is not a necessity for her as it is for those who must make their own way in the world, nor does she incur the same serious risks as her poorer rivals in choosing a profession. Her professional training is a prudent insurance against changes in fortune. A successful career will bring great distinction, while failure is not a matter of life and death. A show of independence helps one's self-respect. An altruistic pose may be even more delightful, and success in a career may seem likely to afford opportunities for disinterested service to humanity which are not open to those who rely on their profession for their livelihood. A profession provides education and interests, while home life can appear narrow and contemptible. Preparation, it is true, costs money, but the cost is not exorbitant. It requires thought and work, but some temperaments make light of these obstacles and derive a pleasant thrill from their courage. Of course the family will be shocked, but to shock the family is always amusing. Indeed, it is good for the family to be shocked, and if this innocent way were not open, one might be driven to extreme measures—as the family must realize in its moments of sanity, if it has any. The choice is as good as made, but it is agreeable to prolong the period of hesitation and to fill it with day-dreams.

The young woman is unlikely to remember in her dream world that those to whom a profession is a luxury are often ready to propose standards of professional ethics which infuriate those to whom it is a means of earning bread and butter. It is unpleasant for them to explain that they are too poor to observe exalted principles, and utterly demoralizing for them to do lip service to principles which they know that they will not be able to observe in the hour of temptation. For Canadians who think of a foreign policy, the most alluring of all day-dreams is to imagine Canada playing an important part in establishing permanent international peace. It is a pleasant dream, and certainly not an ignoble one. But as Canadians succumb to its charms, they close their eyes

to the fact that, with the best intentions, they are preventing a frank recognition of the practical difficulties which confront peoples as well intentioned as themselves, though less fortunately circumstanced. If they are to be fair to others, they must shake themselves out of their day-dreams and make their thought simple and direct.

2. *The Price of Peace.*

The question whether international peace can be maintained without the sacrifice of things which matter more than peace is seldom frankly faced. It is easy to depict the horrors of modern war as a demonstration that no greater evil can befall mankind. Psychologically this demonstration works like a conjurer's trick by concentrating the attention of the dupe where the conjurer is prepared to baffle it. The vital question whether an individual nation has ever any reason to expect that it may gain from a particular war is gently thrust aside.

Canadians are not likely to recall the banished question, for Canadian interests lie in maintaining existing conditions. They do not think of Canada expecting to gain from a war, or of other nations conspiring to gain at Canada's expense. If the question whether any nation ever gains from a war is pressed, it is easy to contend that any apparent advantages are illusory because they are more than off-set by evils which, in the past, belligerent statesmen have stupidly under-rated. Perhaps an historian might detect the hand of the conjurer in this argument too. The fatal mistakes of statesmen may have been military rather than economic. Disastrous wars have been fought because each side erroneously believed that it could achieve a quick and favourable decision. It is quite possible to imagine profitable wars. Had the United States, for instance, been obliged to resort to war to acquire the right to build the Panama Canal, the adventure might have been profitable for the United States and beneficial for the rest of the world. Negatively, the threat of war can protect the vested interests of possessing countries, and it is the balance of force in the world which enables the United States and Canada to treat Asiatics as they do. The vast importance of the interests which have been preserved without fighting, but because fighting was a possibility, usually passes unnoticed because the skilful conjurer forces on us the convenient assumption that any system which ensures peace will also guarantee these interests. And yet it might be a very bad system if it did, for some of these interests are abominable abuses. For all that, we make the assumption exactly as

the rich assume that the law will in all circumstances protect their great possessions. Like the rich, we deceive ourselves. Law may take the form of predatory legislation, and the establishment of permanent peace may mark the end of national sovereignty.

It is easy to persuade ourselves that our own vested interests are such reasonable ones that they could readily be secured by peaceful means in a world from which war and fear of war had been banished. It would suit Canada very well if all nations renounced aggression and undertook to protect existing interests by collective guarantees. To attain a world settlement which ensures peace and yet maintains national sovereignty intact may well be the most sensible objective for a Canadian foreign policy. But it would be grossly misleading to call such a policy the pursuit of peace. It is the pursuit of peace *plus* national sovereignty. There is a peculiarly mean dishonesty in consciously using phrases which conceal the sacrifices which the States least endowed with natural resources would have to make in accepting such a policy. These sacrifices would be the price of peace, and those who pay the price should get a receipt.

It is perhaps inevitable that the great possessing nations should use these deceptive phrases unconsciously. Their rights are for the most part well established and recognized. These rights do not depend for their validity on any modern judgment of the way in which they were originally acquired. A guarantee of these rights seems obviously reasonable, providing that the corresponding rights of other nations are equally guaranteed. But to the nations whose natural resources and whose accumulations of capital are inadequate for their populations such a guarantee of their meagre rights is a poor return for the renunciation of any possibility of establishing their claims to consideration from the possessing nations otherwise than by universal consent. It is one thing to acquiesce peaceably in rights based on force. It is another thing to agree to respect these rights if the balance of force changes, thus transforming might into right and renouncing all hope of a "new deal" except as a matter of grace.

An alternative to this objective of "peace *plus* national sovereignty" is "peace *plus* international justice." This too is a possible objective for a Canadian foreign policy, though perhaps not a very sensible one. In this case the price of peace would have to be paid not by the proletarian nations, but by the great possessing nations of which Canada is one. Now these are the powerful nations. They possess because of their power, and their power is maintained by their possessions. They do not expect to have to pay a price for peace.

3. *Canada's Choice.*

For a time the well chosen and well worn phrases of skilled statesmen may conceal the horns of the dilemma, but ultimately Canadians must face the question whether they wish a foreign policy directed towards "peace *plus* national sovereignty" or towards "peace *plus* international justice". We have seen that Canada's material interests are adequately protected by the first of these two formulae. Behind its shelter Canadians could maintain their immigration policy and even the insulting provisions of the *Chinese Immigration Act*. They could dispose as they pleased of their immense possessions of land and natural resources, and divide among their people the vast income of a landlord. Canada's sentimental interests also are well served by this formula; for national sovereignty appears as a mature development of Dominion autonomy. Then too, if Canadians choose this formula, they will find themselves, if not on the side of the Angels, at least in the company of their friends. Great Britain and the United States, France and Australia stand high among the possessing nations. So obvious are these considerations that no one is likely to abuse Canada for preferring "peace *plus* national sovereignty" to "peace *plus* international justice". Nor will Canadians have the least difficulty in establishing a tradition of disinterested service to the cause of international peace which can be enshrined in text books and flourished at international conferences.

To state the case against these overwhelming inducements is little more than an intellectual exercise. The first objection is that the system of "peace *plus* national sovereignty" is morally repulsive; the second that it can have no application to civil wars, and therefore does not imply world peace; the third that it cannot be permanently successful.

The moral difficulty is that in national political systems the idea has become intolerable that any vested interest should be placed in a legally unassailable position, or that any group should have its particular interests guaranteed for all time. The proposed system of peace based on national sovereignty does exactly this thing internationally. It "freezes" an existing situation so that no subsequent changes can be made except by the consent of all concerned.

As long as national sovereignty survives, rebellion and civil war are domestic issues. A cynic might say that one of the few remaining privileges of membership in the British Commonwealth is the immunity of the members *inter se* from the obligations of

the Briand-Kellogg treaties. American experience reminds us that civil war in its maturer forms can give rise to all the evils of international war. A system of "peace *plus* international justice", if it is practicable at all, could deal with the events which provoke civil war by providing other channels of relief for desperate citizens.

Then the system of "peace *plus* national sovereignty", just because it does guarantee existing interests which, in many cases, have no better sanction than the use of force or the lapse of time, may be subjected to great stresses as the balance of force changes. If a proletarian nation becomes a strong power, as Japan has done, it cannot be expected to respect arrangements which guarantee the rights of others but leave its own claims to the mercies of the possessing powers. A society of retired burglars cannot seriously hope for a system of philosophical anarchy in which its poorer neighbours will show an honest respect for property. An alliance of possessing powers who guarantee one another's possessions is not an unlikely or even a wholly undesirable political arrangement, but it cannot without cynical hypocrisy masquerade as a system of permanent peace.

4. *The Best of Both Worlds.*

The argument of the last section can be differently expressed. The problem of abolishing international war is really analogous not to that of suppressing duelling, but to that of putting an end to civil war. This was achieved not by establishing courts which could merely protect existing rights, but by providing legislative means for changing laws whose operation resulted in intolerable situations. The legislature can give effect to the claims of dispossessed classes, and it is only when it is not responsive to reasonable manifestations of popular discontent that revolutions occur. Internationally the abolition of war may be expected to require the creation not merely of international courts and international police, but of an international legislature as well.

To the argument in this form there is an attractive answer. Historically courts precede legislatures, and the protection of recognized rights comes before the provision of machinery for their modification. Should we not, therefore, aim at abolishing international war here and now, and trust to the future for the development of an international government, which may come by gradual and almost imperceptible stages so that the appearance of national sovereignty will be preserved long after the thing itself has passed away?

Is this answer valid? Courts have been at times law-making bodies, though they have usually belittled this incongruous function. The early courts were not deliberately created with the idea that they should pave the way for legislatures destined to become their masters. They are hardly a fair parallel for planned developments undertaken by formal international action with full consciousness of the possibilities. Creative evolution does not confine itself to the slow processes of unconscious evolution, and if we base peace machinery on the preservation of all the rights of national sovereignty, we renounce for a long time to come the attempt to base peace on international justice.

5. *The Thin Edge of the Wedge.*

Practical men are given to dismiss impatiently these historical and evolutionary analogies, and to say that any peace machinery that is practicable is worth having, that the price of peace cannot well be too high, that it does not matter much who pays it, that any injustice to proletarian nations or to other dissatisfied nations is a minor evil, that Canadians at any rate are not directly affected and are doing all that can be expected of them if they keep an open mind and deal in a conciliatory spirit with any claims that may be made. Canadian statesmen can say this sort of thing very well. Nor will the exclusion of Asiatics from the franchise in British Columbia or the harshness of the *Chinese Immigration Act* embarrass them. They can say that they personally are prepared to take a liberal view of these things, but that political considerations make it impossible to take any action at the present time.

In the same way the leaders of every other possessing country can find an excuse if their country is asked for a concession in the name of international equity. It is, therefore, to be expected that the possessing nations will agree that a system based on "peace *plus* national sovereignty" is not inconsistent with reasonable change, and does not preclude progress on lines which are safe and sane.

This doctrine, which is almost certain to prevail in Canada and in other possessing countries, is really based on the assumption that "peace *plus* national sovereignty" will not lead to "peace *plus* international justice", and that no possessing nation need be apprehensive of having to part with its cherished possessions. The faint suggestion that a system of "peace *plus* national sovereignty" is the thin edge of the wedge for introducing a system

of peace secured by the establishment and maintenance of international justice, is designed to excite hopes which there is to be no obligation to satisfy.

Yet this theoretical possibility of development from a static to a dynamic system must be considered with all the seriousness which we can command. It is the ostensible reason for accepting a system which is morally dubious. Let us assume for a moment that it is a valid reason. In this case Canada cannot accept the idea of "peace *plus* national sovereignty", which seemed to have such attractions for her, unless she is prepared to accept ultimately the idea of "peace *plus* international justice". But we have seen that acceptance of international justice as a goal would jeopardize some of Canada's material interests, and would raise political issues which Canadian statesmen prefer to avoid. Canada, as one of the possessing nations, would have to pay part of the price of peace. Her present position is one of substantial security enjoyed at a negligible cost. Is Canada prepared to give this up for the chance of basing international peace securely on international justice?

6. *Canada's Sheltered Position.*

We began by assuming that a foreign policy was not a necessity for Canada. We have just developed this assumption by suggesting that Canada's present position is more favourable to her immediate interests than membership in a peace system aiming at ideals of international justice which might be understood in a sense destructive of Canada's proprietary rights. Are these assumptions justified?

Canada is undoubtedly in the happy position of claiming no substantial rights or privileges which are not already recognized as hers. Any attack upon her would thus appear as an outrage which would alarm all possessing nations. Two of the most powerful of these would be directly concerned, and their economic and military support is practically certain. Great Britain for reasons of sentiment, and probably for reasons of policy as well, could hardly refuse assistance. The United States for economic reasons, for strategic reasons and probably also for sentimental reasons would dislike aggression against Canada by either European or Asiatic powers. Canadians count so thoroughly on the protection of Great Britain and the United States that they would be shocked by the suggestion that formal guarantees were desirable.

Theoretically, of course, one or both of the protective powers might resort to aggression. Fortunately neither has any rational

motive for so doing, nor any interest in forcing a quarrel on the other. Great Britain has expressly renounced any claims which she might have had to control Canadian affairs. As against intervention from the United States, Canada is secure at least as long as she remains better governed than the United States and a safer refuge for investors. The condition is not a harsh one, and its observance is cheaper than armament.

7. *Sincerity and Fair Play.*

Perhaps a defence of inaction can be found without exposing Canadians to the accusation of hypocrisy, if they are intelligent, or self-deception, if they are stupid. A line which is fine but clear can be drawn between hypocrisy and reluctance to abandon ideals the moment one realizes that it is impossible to live up to them. There is nothing hypocritical in recognizing the fact that there is no agreement among Canadians as to the proper objectives of a Canadian foreign policy and no prospect of agreement. This disagreement may make us unwilling or even unable to frame a foreign policy. Hypocrisy begins only if Canadians defend, on grounds of high morality, a policy of drift which is dictated by political necessity.

It is important to recognize this point if we are to be fair to other peoples who, like Canadians, are in constant danger of rationalizing political necessity and appearing as shameless hypocrites. To accept political necessity as a justification for Canadian policy and deny the same defence to others would be as outrageous as for Americans to justify their attitude on war debts or tariffs by reasons of domestic politics and, at the same time, abuse the French for insisting on defaulting on their debt or on building fortifications because of the wishes of their own electorate.

Canada, substantially safe under existing conditions, and with nothing whatever to lose from a system of "peace *plus* national sovereignty", is not a fair judge of less fortunate countries, nor is her behaviour a fair standard by which to judge theirs. The danger is that Canada may help to make it difficult for the proletarian countries to say with sufficient emphasis what it is essential that they should say: that a peace which perpetuates existing rights is unsatisfactory and, in the long run, impracticable.

Canada's good fortune does not end with immunity from attack. Neither of the protective powers can require Canada to make any contribution to the cost of her defence. Even if a world wide race in armaments begins, the measure of Canada's obligations

is her own self-respect. With a little ingenuity—or with becoming naiveté—Canadians can preserve and flatter their self-respect by declaring that they disapprove of armaments and that security which rests on force is not worth having.

The lot of Canadians is a happy one. They can feel secure in the enjoyment of their immense resources, and experience the moral satisfaction of despising those nations that maintain armaments to protect their smaller patrimonies. Within a national State the rich and righteous are exposed to the risk of predatory legislation. Within the existing international system Canada can be rich and righteous without fear. The camel can pass through the eye of the needle.

For rich people who live in Canada the situation is delightful. If they are asked to pay a ransom for their wealth, they can reply to the reformer, "If you deny the moral validity of our title to our property because our neighbours are poor, you must to be consistent deny the validity of Canada's holdings of natural resources and invite Canada to share them with the proletarian nations. Or do you contend that nationhood sanctifies landlordism, and that the equalization of fortunes should stop when a national boundary is reached? You cannot carry nationalism to so odious an extreme! With what horror you must look on your supporters, who are quite as reluctant as any other class of society to admit the poorer peoples of the world to a share of Canada's unearned income!"

It is hard for the poorer nations to be frank. They cannot say that they look to war to redress the evils which the wars of the past have left on our hands, or which have grown up behind the defensive forces of powerful States or groups of States. They can only urge that a static system will not do. The danger is that Canada may help in forcing them to accept a system which appears to be dynamic when it is really static and which, while it presents no formal obstacles to progress, allows material obstacles to form a complete barrier.

Just as we must be fair to other States when their behaviour seems conclusive evidence of hypocrisy, we must be fair to our own leaders when they appear to deserve the same charge. Our leaders have to propose in words a policy acceptable to the bulk of the people. Unless they succeed, they will not remain leaders. To ask them to accept this policy as their own ideal is to ask for stupid leaders. To expect a pious fraud which will foist an enlightened policy on a benighted electorate is to ask for dishonest leaders. To demand a frank admission that policy is dictated by

political expediency is to ask for suicidal leaders. The quality of frankness becomes the critic but not the statesman. If Canada is to have a foreign policy—or indeed if a policy of drift is to be continued—then Canadians, like other people, must be tolerant of reasonable reticence and evasiveness.

8. *International Justice.*

Unfortunately it is particularly easy for leaders who are reticent or evasive to escape from an attempt to make a reality of the policy which has been called "peace *plus* international justice". It is child's play to ask what is meant by international justice, and to point out that no canons of justice are generally accepted. It is easy to say, or to imply, that what is legal is just and that what is legal is precisely the right of a nation to do what it will with its own, which we call national sovereignty. It is easy to ridicule the idea that robbing the rich to give to the poor can seem just to anyone but bandits in fables. It sounds statesmanlike, probably it is statesmanlike, to say that to expose well-established rights to the dialectics of youthful revolutionaries is to invite anarchy. A statesman who could not speak to this brief would be as incompetent as an actor who could not play the villain or the clown.

Of course there is an answer. But to make this answer effective, to make it carry irresistible conviction to those whose deepest interests are perhaps to be destroyed by it, to drive it into the minds of people unaccustomed to hard and fearless thinking, to force it into the hearts of people whose emotions have been conditioned into the rigid channels of nationalism—this is a task which requires super-human eloquence or miraculous luck.

The raw material for the answer is somewhat as follows: No one in his senses demands of any legal system, whether national or international, that it should give instant recognition to every claim which will ever be accepted by mankind as just. To demand justice as the goal does not mean that one expects the goal to be reached at once. It may never be reached. It may recede like the horizon. The demand is that the way be left open so that attempts to change existing conditions in the direction indicated by international ideas of justice may have a reasonable chance of success. It is something to create a court which can go beyond rigid principles mechanically applied. It is more to create a court which can take cognizance of equity or public policy. It is still more to create a legislature in which a minority can make itself heard and can strive to become a majority. It is much if it can

be established that no vested interest will be immune from the rational condemnation of a substantial majority. Perhaps it is all that one should ask, but one cannot ask for less.

9. *Conclusion.*

Of course we have asked for more than Canadians are at all likely to give. It is one thing to discuss what course of action is best, another thing to engage in prediction or fortune-telling. The probability is that the inertia to be overcome before any clear cut policy can be adopted will be too great in Canada, as elsewhere, and that the Canadian policy, or absence of policy, will represent a successful attempt to avoid causing violent dissatisfaction in any quarter. The common sense view, that it would be madness to attempt to set up an all-powerful international organization to ensure peace in the world, when our own peace is substantially secured by armaments for which we pay nothing, is probably far too tenaciously held to be seriously shaken by any argument. There usually goes with it the common sense view that it is best to tolerate a little discussion by intellectuals. But this discussion should mislead no one as to the probabilities. If we revert to our original comparison, we can say that the young woman of independent means may permit herself a few day-dreams, but that she is far too cautious and sensible to take a professional career seriously.