

International Law Studies – Volume 43

International Law Documents

U.S. Naval War College (Editor)

The thoughts and opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily of the U.S. government, the U.S. Department of the Navy or the Naval War College.

XIX. Sovereign Equality for All Nations

Statement by the Secretary of State

(The Department of State Bulletin, Vol. X, No. 258, June 3, 1944)

At his press and radio news conference on June 1 the Secretary of State made the following reply in answer to a question whether there was anything he could say that might be of reassurance to the small nations. The correspondent who asked the question pointed out that some of the small nations seemed to think that they would not be properly represented in the proposed international organization:

“That is a matter in which the small nations and the large nations as well should be at all times especially interested. It is a mutual affair. The future welfare of each nation depends upon the welfare of all. In view of that common interest and that self-interest in every mutual sense, I doubt whether there would be many nations, large or small, which would have any other purpose than to cooperate in all legitimate and practicable international relationships that would be mutually advantageous and mutually profitable. As far as this Government is concerned, whenever I have said anything on this subject, it has always emphasized the all-inclusive nature of the world situation and our disposition and purpose to see that all nations, especially the small nations, are kept on a position of equality with all others and that, in every practicable way, there will be cooperation.

“Now, it is not possible at this stage for this Government or any government to give anybody a blueprint as to all of the details of how these relationships between all of the different nations will be gradually developed and perfected. There is no occasion to be especially concerned about the

attitude of this Government in view of the declarations that the President, and I, and others have made. The truth is that even those declarations are not necessarily called for in the light of our entire history and our traditions. We have for 150 years preached liberty to all the nations of the earth, to all the peoples of the earth, and we have practiced it. We have encouraged all nations to aspire to liberty, and to enjoy it. Our attitude toward the Philippines is a striking example. Nobody had to put us on the witness stand to know what we were doing for them.

“Even back in our earlier days we preached the same spirit of liberty with which we, ourselves, were inspired in acquiring our own liberty, to all the nations—especially those that were in chains of depotism, as the South American countries were for centuries under Spanish rule. Nobody asked us to do it. That was our philosophy. That was our spirit, both at home and toward all peoples who might aspire to liberty. As soon as our American neighbors threw off the Spanish yoke we proceeded to recognize them, right and left. We had the same spirit toward Greece and other countries desiring liberty as we demonstrated in the Philippines. That has been our consistent record, a record of championship of liberty for everybody, encouraging them at all times and in all places. I see no reason why this country, this great free people who through generations have dedicated themselves to this wonderful human cause and preserved it—I see no reason why they should be catechized every morning before breakfast as to their loyalty to liberty, or their consistent desire of liberty for everybody and freedom for aspiring peoples everywhere.”