

Prime Minister

Odvar Nordli

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT LUNCHEON IN  
LONGYEARBYEN MAY 14, 1930

Mr. Prime Minister, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very glad to have the opportunity to be with you here to-day. I am also pleased that this year's excursion for the Diplomatic Corps in Oslo has given you an impression of our northern-most province. First an overview of the archipelago, followed by a closer look at the community here in Longyearbyen, and its mining industry.

I am grateful to Mr. Grøndahl, our Sysselmann, and to Mr. Ohm and his staff of Store Norske Spitsbergen Kulkompani, for the warm welcome they have given us, and for what they have shown us here in Longyearbyen.

As you know, fruitless attempts were made to settle the international status of Spitsbergen before the First World War. It was only in connection with the general peace conference at Versailles that it was possible to find a solution. It was found most practical simply to recognise Norway's sovereignty over the archipelago, while at the same time ensuring that the interests of the international community were safeguarded.

This is why the Treaty of 1920 establishes the full and absolute sovereignty of Norway over Svalbard, subject to "certain stipulations". These conditions were intended to provide for a regime in the islands that could assure their development and peaceful utilisation.

The sovereignty which Norway has assumed carries with it certain absolute and exclusive rights and powers. At the same time, the Svalbard Treaty imposes on Norway an important responsibility towards the international community, and specific duties and obligations towards the other Parties to the Treaty.

I can assure you that the Government of Norway is deeply committed to carry out its obligations under the Svalbard Treaty.

For sixty years, that Treaty has provided for the orderly administration of Svalbard as an integral part of Norway. It has effectively removed Svalbard from the sphere of international conflict and contributed to peaceful relations in the Arctic. This has become

an established factor in the political geography of Europe. I believe it is in everyone's interest that it should remain so for the future.

Our excursions to-day have, I hope, given you a vivid impression of the physical geography of Svalbard. The natural beauty of the scenery, and the virtually unspoilt environment require protection. We have sought to provide that protection by way of appropriate regulations, including the establishment of national parks and nature reserves.

It would be wrong to think that Svalbard is first and foremost a matter of natural beauty and local government administration. Here, as elsewhere, economic activity is a fundamental condition for human existence. In Svalbard, a balance has been struck between environmental concerns and economic necessity. On the basis of that balance, I foresee a confident future for the mining industry in Svalbard. Coal will form an increasingly important part of our energy supply, and there are substantial reserves in Svalbard.

Svalbard should also remain open<sup>to</sup> opportunities to developing other resources, and also for other commercial activities, if they are economically viable. Svalbard will continue to be a field of challenge as well as a practical laboratory for scientific research. We welcome these activities on the terms laid down in the Svalbard Treaty, and in the relevant laws and regulations. I know that the Sysselmann will provide protection and orderly administration for all.

In conclusion I would like to pay a tribute to all those who have, in the past, and in our days, contributed towards the development of Svalbard. Under rigorous natural conditions, they have worked with imagination, courage and persistence to create the communities which are here to-day, and of which we can be proud.