

A further advance in the Department's development came as the result of an agreement reached at the Imperial Conference in 1926, by which the Governor General ceased to represent the Government of the United Kingdom and became the personal representative of the King. This brought about two changes: (1) as the United Kingdom Government was now without a representative in Canada, it appointed a High Commissioner to represent it at Ottawa; (2) after July 1, 1927, correspondence from governments was addressed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs instead of to the Governor General.

All official external communications now are channelled through the Department of External Affairs, although decisions may be made by the Government or by the departments directly concerned. There is usually no direct intercourse between governments of other countries and federal departments (other than External Affairs) or provincial governments. Communications requiring action by provincial governments are passed on by the Department of External Affairs to the Office of the Secretary of State for Canada, whence they are forwarded to their destination. Replies from provincial governments utilize the same channel.

Representation Abroad

Before 1926, Canada had no diplomatic representatives abroad, although, as early as 1920, it was announced that a minister would be appointed to Washington. The appointment was made in 1926, and the first Canadian legation was opened in Washington early in 1927. This was followed in 1928 by the appointment of a Canadian minister to serve in Paris and, in 1929, by the opening of a legation in Tokyo. At about the same time, the United States, France and Japan opened legations in Ottawa.

The expansion of the service was interrupted by the depression of the 1930's. The three years of rapid expansion from 1926 to 1929 were followed by a decade of consolidation. The next step in the exchange of diplomatic representatives with other countries was taken when Belgium sent a minister to Ottawa in 1937; in January 1939, Canada appointed a minister to Belgium and the Netherlands.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, it became imperative that Canada should have more intimate contacts with other members of the British Commonwealth and with many foreign countries as well. The day after Canada's separate declaration of war on September 10, 1939, it was announced that the Canadian Government would send high commissioners to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Ireland. The Commonwealth governments reciprocated. With the appointment in 1941 of a high commissioner to Newfoundland (a step that recognized the importance of that country to the defence of Canada), the list of Canadian representatives to Commonwealth countries was complete, except for India.

The increasing magnitude of Canada's war effort and its growing international commitments led to a rapid increase of diplomatic exchanges with foreign countries.