

PREFACE

To a generation of Canadians which has seen two major wars and two major attempts to establish an orderly and peaceful world, which daily follows the many moves in the international scene and Canada's concern with them, the foreign policy of this country is both a matter of close interest and a part of their responsibility as citizens. Although the foreign policy of any country must from time to time be adapted to changing circumstances, there are in it continuing threads which represent the ideals, as well as the interests, of a people. A knowledge of past policy is therefore of value not only to scholars who study and interpret Canadian history but also to those who seek a broader understanding than a knowledge of current events can provide. It is with these twin purposes in mind that the Department of External Affairs has undertaken the publication of a series of volumes intended to provide the documentary basis for a study of Canadian external policy in the past.

By 1909, the year in which the Canadian Department of External Affairs was established, the world political order of the early twentieth century which was to be destroyed by the impact of two world wars and the challenge of revolutionary political forces, was already threatened by the German naval programme aimed at ending the British supremacy of sea power on which that order rested. Canada, a young state which had not yet assumed full exercise in practice of its sovereignty in the field of foreign relations, took little part in the major and mounting international crisis, but recognized that her security was questioned with that of the United Kingdom. The full impact of the significance of foreign policy came with the war of 1914.

This is in retrospect, although not necessarily reflected in bulk of documents, the main theme of the period of ten years which the present volume covers. The great responsibilities assumed by Canada in this war led to a re-examination of her proper part in the direction of it and, in turn, to new thinking on the nature of the imperial structure. In the next volume which it is hoped to publish, that on the Peace Conference of Paris, will be seen an extension of this line of thought.