

One of the reasons why the government leaders kept matters of foreign concern so largely in their own hands and avoided parliamentary discussion, as has been intimated, was the complex nature of Canada itself. As shown at the time of the South African War, and during the naval debates in 1911 and 1912, and during the first War, and, during the post-war years, with the League of Nations, the challenge of the Chanak incident, and the Geneva Protocol, public opinion was likely to be divided, with resultant political tension. Therefore public debate was to be avoided as much as possible. Sectionalism and cross-currents were dangerous threats to the essential unity of Canada, and even to the stability of government. The leaders therefore sought to avoid statements or discussions which might accentuate those divisions of public opinion - often geographical or racial - that existed. Consequently the government, which alone was in possession of the full information required in framing external policy, chose as far as possible to keep such intricate matters from the precarious forum of less informed parliamentary debate.

In a country where party politics strongly subsist, and a government rests on party majority in the Lower House of Parliament, foreign policy has to operate, so far as possible, free from party dissensions; and consequently must seek to be free, in some cases, from controversial parliamentary