

with the achievement of self-government and union, Canada could turn to external relations with the Empire and the world and to the development of its nationhood. Fighting side by side with Britain in the First World War, Canada was none the less anxious to speak for itself in international matters, and demanded -- and obtained -- a separate seat at the peace conference and in the League of Nations.

The logical outcome of the growing importance and independence of the Dominion in World affairs was reached in the enactment of the Statute of Westminster, in 1931. This gave statutory effect to the Declaration made at an Imperial Conference held in 1926, that the various members of the British Commonwealth of Nations were "autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs." They are united only by a common allegiance to the Crown.

Free to make treaties and trade agreements, free to declare war or stay at peace, Canada can be as independent of Britain as it chooses. Canada, like the other dominions, has a separate system of diplomatic representation. When the Second World War broke out, Canada declared war on its own behalf, seven days after the United Kingdom's declaration. With rapid rise to international importance and advance to the position of third trading nation in the world, Canada is now recognized by other nations as a country in its own right.

When the Department of External Affairs was set up in 1909 Canadian representation abroad consisted of the high commissioner's office in London. Negotiations with foreign powers on such matters as trade and boundaries were conducted through the medium of the British Foreign Office. Dealings with other parts of the Empire passed through the Colonial Office.

The growth of the department was gradual until 1926. From that year until 1929 Canadian representation abroad was increased more rapidly. Then followed a decade of consolidation of the offices. By 1939 there were five Canadian legations (in the United States, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and in Japan) and one high commissioner's office in the United Kingdom.

At the outbreak of war Canada required additional diplomatic contacts. High Commissioners were appointed to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Ireland and Newfoundland.

In 1943 there was an unusually rapid expansion in the exchange of diplomatic missions among the United Nations. In that year the legations in the United States, the Soviet Union, China and Brazil were raised to the status of embassies. There followed early in 1944 the establishment of embassies in Mexico, Chile and Peru. There is also a Canadian legation in Argentina.

A Canadian representative to the French Committee of National Liberation, with the personal rank of ambassador, is now in Paris. A charge d'affaires is maintained in London to the governments-in-exile of Belgium, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Norway, Poland and Yugoslavia.

In summary, Canada now maintains seven embassies, eight legations, (including the representations to the foreign governments in London) and six high commissioners' offices.

In so far as Canada has a written constitution, that document is the British North America Act, 1867, with subsequent amendments. A large part of Canadian constitutional practice is, however, unwritten and must therefore be interpreted from historical precedent and common procedure.

The titular head of government is the King, represented by the person of the Governor-General, who retains certain official functions. Parliament consists of two chambers, a Senate of which the members are appointed for life, and a House of Commons to which the members are elected by popular ballot.