

London or wear snowshoes in August, he is inclined to blame Canadian representatives in the United States for not having successfully educated all the one hundred and forty million people of that country to know better. Crass ignorance is always deplorable, but you must not expect too much. We know, of course, in Canada a great deal more about the United States than they know about us, but that is because we are a smaller country, much affected by nearly everything important that goes on south of the border, and able to follow the course of events there by reading our own newspapers. We could, nevertheless, if we tried, produce just as grotesque misconceptions about the United States which are cherished by some Canadians. In fact, very little damage is done by the existence of prevailing pockets of ignorance of this sort. It is not dangerous ignorance. While the situation has improved a great deal during the last twenty years, one should not get alarmed or irritated because false or distorted ideas still frequently prevail. There is no way of compelling the people of any country to assimilate facts.

Spreading information abroad about Canada is a function by no means confined wholly to specialists in the Canadian Information Service, which has recently become a part of the Department of External Affairs. It engages part of the time of every officer of the Embassy, and a good deal of the Ambassador's own time. For Ambassadors are supposed to make speeches even when they have no oratorical gifts - speeches in which they must be careful to avoid giving offence to anyone, a condition which sets a high premium on the art of making platitudes sound novel. They must also see members of the press fairly frequently, and be prepared as well, when they meet people, to be asked questions ranging from the size of the Canadian national debt to the dog-licensing provisions at a summer resort.

Finally, another branch of the functions of a diplomatic mission is to watch over the interests of Canadian individuals and companies when they are affected by acts of the Government of the country concerned. The enormous variety of troubles into which Canadians can get themselves all over the world impresses itself on anyone who has seen much of the workings of the Department of External Affairs. I had supposed that we were on the whole a fairly stay-at-home people except for our constant journeyings to the United States; we have, after all, a large Canadian patrimony to move around in. I can assure you that that is not the case. Fortunately for the Embassy in Washington, the fact of propinquity saves us a good deal in this branch of work. Most of the Canadians in trouble south of the border extricate themselves without invoking official aid. The Embassy does an active business, nevertheless, along certain lines, some of which might lead one to the erroneous conclusion that we are a lawless and unregenerate nation. Another side of this work, respectable and active, relates to the issuance and renewal of passports, advising on questions of citizenship and so on.

You may note that I have said nothing about one sort of activity which is that most commonly made the subject of ridicule by those who poke fun at my adopted profession. For a long time a certain Member of Parliament, not unknown in Toronto, could not mention Canadian representatives abroad without introducing references to striped pants, pink teas, late dinner parties and the like. Of course, I own striped pants myself, but I think, that I have less occasion to wear them in Washington than I would if I were a respected elder citizen of Toronto.

Seriously, there is a good deal of social activity and some formality surrounding part of the work of representing one's country abroad. I hope I have said enough about the functions of an Embassy to show that its members have occupations which are not purely social, in order to justify their existence. Since it is the duty of representatives abroad to achieve a wide acquaintance, and since being entertained and entertaining is the simplest and most effective method of doing this, one cannot dismiss social activities as merely frivolous. Often useful work in furthering the interests of one's country can best be achieved outside office hours and around a dinner table. Talk runs more freely when the advancing clock in the office is not drawing attention to the next appointment a few minutes away, or to the pile of papers waiting to be dealt with.