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Special Articles

The Freedom of Industry.
 By J. W. Macmillan.

War's Effect on the Bank Branch Extension Movement.
 By H. M. P. Eckardt.

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Representation at Washington

OTTAWA, Jan. 21.—Some time ago the establishment of a permanent High Commissioner for Canada at Washington was proposed, and Hon. J. D. Hazen was mentioned in connection with it. There were some negotiations over the status of the position, and finally Mr. Hazen became Chief Justice of New Brunswick.

Canadian business interests in Montreal, Toronto and elsewhere are now urging the appointment of a direct Canadian representative in the United States capital, and the matter will be taken up before long.—Montreal Star.

The persistency with which this Washington scheme is revived from time to time suggests that somebody is particularly interested in promoting it. We must doubt, however, of "business interests in Montreal, Toronto and elsewhere" are behind it. So far no representative business organization has been found supporting the proposal.

There are in most cases two sides to a question. Perhaps there are in this case. But if there is any side of it that presents good reasons for the proposed appointment it has never been revealed to the public. There has been no such Parliamentary discussion as that which usually precedes the creation of a new and important post. No difficulty has occurred, so far as the public know, in the transaction of Canadian business at Washington under the existing system. Nobody has brought to public notice any event which has shown the present system to be defective. In short, while there are strong reasons against the project, there is, so far as the public know, absolutely no reason which demands the creation of the new office.

The carrying out of the proposal would create a very expensive establishment at Washington. For people in official life the American capital is one of the most expensive cities in the world. Several years ago, when things were much less expensive than now, a visitor to Washington met an American Cabinet Minister who had just been appointed to office. "I suppose," remarked the visitor, "that you are getting settled down in your new station." "No," replied the new Secretary, "I have not yet found a suitable place to live in. I did see a likely house to-day and I offered the owner my whole salary as rent, but he refused it." A salary on which a Cabinet Minister might exist (if not live comfortably) at Ottawa would send a Washington official, if he were not rich, into the bankruptcy court in a month. To maintain a decent establishment for a Canadian representative of high rank at Washington would require a salary at least four or five times that which Canada allows a Cabinet Minister at Ottawa. We do not believe the Canadian people are

in a mood to stand such expensive nonsense at this time. Canada is able and willing to pay for really necessary service, but has no money to spare for costly frills at home or abroad.

Apart from the question of cost, the appointment of a Canadian representative at Washington seems undesirable, because our national status makes it impossible to have a resident representative there who could be much more than a clerk in the British Embassy. It is possible that the appointment of a Canadian official of that class as an attache of the Embassy would at times facilitate the transaction of Canadian business. But that is a very different thing from the creation of a position such as is now talked of. Canada is a part of the British Empire and as such is represented at Washington by the British Ambassador. A resident Canadian representative would always necessarily be a subordinate of the Ambassador. In that relation the two might work together smoothly, but what is much more likely is that friction would arise between them, or between the Canadian official and the Ambassador's staff. The assertion by the Canadian of anything like an independent authority would almost certainly be resented by the representatives of the British Foreign Office, and thus the relations between Canada and the Mother Country would become strained.

The present arrangements for the handling of Canadian affairs at Washington seem to be all that are required at present, and probably they are all that are possible under our constitutional status. For some years, since the beginning of Lord Bryce's term at Washington, the British Ambassador has made periodical visits to Ottawa, meeting the members of our Government and other public men and becoming familiar with Canadian public opinion. Routine matters of Canadian business at Washington are readily attended to by the Ambassador and his staff, aided at times by visits of an official from the Ottawa Departments. Whenever a matter of large importance arises, a Canadian Minister goes down. Coming with the authority of his office, fresh from consultation with his colleagues of the Cabinet, he brings to the subject a knowledge and an influence far greater than could be possessed by any resident Canadian official, and with the co-operation of the Ambassador, which is cheerfully given, the Minister is able to make a satisfactory disposal of the business in hand. What better system can be desired?

In the light of the information available, it is not too much to say that a Canadian representative at Washington could do no good. But he could easily do much harm, besides wasting a very large sum of Canadian money. If there are any real grounds for the Washington movement it is time that the public was made acquainted with them.