

The new High Commissioner

An interview with the Honourable Donald Campbell Jamieson, PC, Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom

Mr. Don Jamieson was nominated late last year by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau as Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, succeeding Mrs. Jean Casselman Wadds who was named as a member of the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada. He brings with him many years of experience in Canadian politics and also in the Canadian broadcasting industry. He served in the Second World War with the Canadian Armed Forces Radio Network and after that worked as a journalist, a radio and television commentator and a broadcasting executive. His political career began in 1966 when he was elected to Parliament for the constituency of Burin-Burgeo on the south coast of Newfoundland. He has held a number of important cabinet posts including the position of Secretary of State for External Affairs, from 1976 to 1979. He is married to the former Barbara Oakley of Greenspond, Newfoundland, and they have four children, Donna, Heather, Roger and Debbie.

Mr. Jamieson granted this interview to Canada Today prior to his arrival in London. In it he talks about his goals as High Commissioner and the future directions he sees for Canada-United Kingdom relations.



Mr. Jamieson, as our seventeenth High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, you follow in the footsteps of many remarkable predecessors. What was your reaction to the Prime Minister's announcement of your appointment?

I am happy and proud to take up this new challenge. My grandfather emigrated to Newfoundland exactly 100 years ago from the north of Scotland so coming to this island is in a sense a homecoming for me. The job itself is very important, and, as you note in mentioning my predecessors, I am inheriting a proud tradition.

You have had many years of experience in the federal cabinet, as Minister of Defence Production, Transport, Regional Economic Expansion, Trade and, finally, Secretary of State for External Affairs. How does it feel to now become a working diplomat?

Well, I've always had a reputation as an open and vigorous politician. Diplomats have a reputation as stodgy pin-striped bureaucrats that I have found to be undeserved. When I was first appointed as Minister responsible for External Affairs people wondered how my straightforward style would fit into the world of diplomacy. I soon found that it was a positive advantage. When I first met Henry Kissinger I said to him, "You know, you called my predecessor by his first name and if we don't do the same thing, it's going to be interpreted as a cooling of Canada-US relations so how the hell are you?" And he said, "Fine, Don," so we were off to the races. It sometimes took longer with

the Soviets, it was half an hour before the Soviet Trade Minister and I were telling jokes. I've found that a straightforward manner is always appreciated. Saying what you think and making your stand on the issues of the day clear is in my view the best way to resolve differences and enhance cooperation.

So what are the issues in Canada-UK relations as you see them?

No one issue predominates at the moment. I'm sure that if you had asked my predecessor Mrs. Wadds this question she never would have predicted that patriation of the constitution would have taken so much of her time and energy. I'm fortunate because I will have time to devote to the whole range of Canada-UK relations – our bilateral political relationships, trade, immigration, culture, scientific relations, defence, and so on.

Do you see any new direction or emphasis in Canada's relations with the UK?

My task will be to see that our traditional close relationships are maintained and prosper. We have to recognise that the generation that experienced the close bonds forged during World War Two are now retiring from government and business. We cannot rely to the same extent on traditional contacts and must take more purposeful steps to see that the relationship is flourishing. There is no doubt too that our traditional relationship has changed since Britain became part of the European