

THE EMERGENCE OF A CONSULAR SYSTEM

Prior to 1947, offices in the United States appeared and disappeared according to the whim of the departments concerned. First, twenty-two immigration offices opened and then gradually declined in numbers until only a single office remained by 1943. Trade and Commerce erratically set up offices in cities where the department believed trade promotion activities demanded a Trade Commissioner, but the only consistent feature of these offices is they all closed within a few months, or at the most, a few years. Likewise, the Department of External Affairs opened its consular offices in the United States at New York and at Portland without first devising a long-term programme.⁸ The haste with which the New York consulate was established, combined with the awkward situations which developed, exemplified this fact.

By 1942, Canadian wartime activities in New York had increased to the extent that the desire of the Wartime Information Board to open an office in New York accompanied a proposal from External Affairs to establish a Consulate General to coordinate Canadian representation. Information Board officials believed that their office would be regarded only as a temporary propaganda agency unless it were combined with an established governmental service. In supporting the proposal of the Information Board, the Department of External Affairs noted that although the Consulate could not take over all functions exercised by the British on behalf of Canada in New York, the office could relieve both the British Consulate General and the Canadian Legation in Washington of many consular activities.³