

the Empire than simply allow it to drift into destruction. Even his scheme for unified imperial diplomatic representation, which had strong support within the British Cabinet, shows a willingness to make some fundamental alterations in the imperial system.

The accuracy of Percy's statement on the willingness of the British Government to accept any reasonable request from Canada can be seen in the ease with which the arrangement for Canadian representation in Washington was reached during the next two years. The fact that a Canadian representative was not sent to Washington until 1927 suggests that the Canadian Government was afraid to initiate so far-reaching a change in the imperial structure; perhaps they feared that such a change might lead to the necessity of talking in terms of ultimatata. Whether this is true or not, it can certainly be safely asserted that the long, slow development of Canadian autonomy was not, as has been so often claimed, a process of Canada continuously pressing for greater independence from an Imperial Government intent on jealously guarding its prerogatives.

These letters demonstrate the fact that one of the unspoken presuppositions of the period was the existence of the British Empire. Christie and Percy almost reached the point of questioning this basic assumption. But the very timidity with which they did so demonstrates the place of "empire" in the contemporary order of things. What these letters do reveal is the search for methods of adapting the political machinery to the realities of the evolving situation. The development of Canadian autonomy was a continuous process of adaptation. When this is acknowledged, and the complexity of Canadian constitutional development is recognized, the violence done to Canadian history by the mythmakers can perhaps be overcome.