

heads of post. More significant challenges for Canada and the rest of the Commonwealth were posed by Ireland's decision to repeal the External Relations Act, its last formal link with the monarchy, and India's move toward a republican constitution. In the former case, there was a drift toward separation from the Commonwealth (with care to protect trade and citizenship preferences), but relations with India were characterized by a strong desire to reach an accommodation. The Canadian Government was taken aback somewhat when Prime Minister John Costello declared Ireland's intention to leave the Commonwealth in a speech in Canada (Document 922), but Mackenzie King's private chat with Costello clearly indicated that there was a mutual desire to make the change as amicably as possible.⁷ While even Mackenzie King tried his hand at drafting some way out of India's dilemma, Pearson was most actively involved in the negotiations with Nehru and others to keep a republican India in a heretofore monarchical Commonwealth. For Canada, it was important that India should stay in the Commonwealth, as its foremost Asian member and as a potential bulwark for the West in that region. In effect, the Commonwealth would be redefined.

What is most striking about the chapter on the Commonwealth (and about the departmental files upon which it is based) is how relatively insignificant were bilateral relations, other than Anglo-Canadian finance and trade. The despatch by Norman Robertson printed herein was a brilliant report on the 'increasing continentalization of the United Kingdom's policy' which received wide circulation in Ottawa, but it did not raise any immediate bilateral issues requiring action (Document 927).

However, there was certainly no lack of attention to international economic relations. The various strands within this topic were closely interwoven, especially the financial and commercial relations within the North Atlantic Triangle of Britain, the United States and Canada. That was nowhere more evident than in the consideration of the Marshall Plan and its implications. At first, the Canadians were wary of any impression in Washington of 'ganging up' by Commonwealth countries against the United States, so a combined approach was emphatically rejected (Documents 585 and 586). Still, the Canadians had to contend with pressure from Washington to assist Britain and thus impress Congress (Document 605). And the tripartite nature of the sterling-dollar problem was underlined when the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps, came to Ottawa (Document 684) and then went on to Washington with the Minister of Finance, Douglas Abbott (Documents 632 to 635).

Curiously, the most emphatic statements of Canada's need to seek 'some pretty far-reaching trade arrangement with our neighbour to the south' came in the context of the bleak preparations for Cripps' visit (Document 675). For the story of the effort to reach a comprehensive agreement with the United States, the King Diary is an indispensable source. In its pages, one can find Abbott's progress report (Document 645), as well as further entries charting the course of negotiations until they were wrecked on the shoals of King's apprehensions (Document 647). That episode did nothing to ease the tensions between King and colleagues such as

⁷King Diary: 9 September 1948.