

Reference to these aspects is made for the purpose of pointing out the multitude of tasks fulfilled by these officers and the care which is taken to regulate the fulfilment of their tasks.

Another aspect which is of no less importance must be borne in mind and relates to the question of ensuring that these instructions are based on sound legal authority. There is no doubt that consular appointments could now be made, subject of course to the procedure in this regard being carefully determined, and that the performance of some of the consular duties already described could appropriately be entrusted, under the existing law, to competent men with reasonable grounds to believe that they would discharge these duties satisfactorily, provided instructions in this connection were prepared for them. It can at once be seen, however, that this would be putting forward only a half baked proposition and would, in practice, offer disadvantages at the very outset. For instance, the appointed consul could issue passports, make trade reports and exercise a few other activities which would be useful to Canadians abroad, but there are other functions which to perform he would have, under the law as it now stands, only a dubious authority or perhaps no legal authority at all. In such cases, he would be bound to refer the applicants to the British consul. We cannot start our consular service on one leg.

This point cannot be too strongly emphasized if it is earnestly desired to create a well equipped institution of this nature. In such important matters as the solemnization of marriage, assistance to the Merchant Marine, taking of evidence and service of documents, administration of oaths, and possibly registration of births and deaths, there is a whole field of survey to be made which requires a long and meticulous study to ascertain what a consul appointed by Canada could legally do, the classes of subject which he could not now claim to deal with, and what legislation should be enacted to empower him to treat these subject matters. These investigations, from the very nature of the subjects just referred to, are bound to be extensive and to require much care and time. Only when this work has been done and the necessary legislation has been passed does it seem that we could proceed to the establishment of a Canadian consular service with a reasonable assurance of giving it a secure foundation. It should be added that the drafting of instructions as already referred to, which must be in accord with the results of these investigations and should not precede them—if we are not to put the cart before the horse—will not be a mean task either.

All these aspects have received some consideration from the authorities concerned from time to time. The great bulk of the spade work which I have mentioned still remains to be done.

From these remarks it may be stated that while the spirit of the resolution is substantially concurred in, it would not be feasible to take immediate action in order to comply with it. It is intended, however, that further attention should be devoted to the whole question in continuation of the consideration already given to it.