

THE CANADIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS*

The need for an informed public opinion to strengthen the position of the government in its conduct of foreign affairs is recognized in every democratic country. For a government to move too far and too fast in the realm of foreign policy in advance of what its people are thinking or feeling is to invite disaster, as Wilson discovered in the United States. On the other hand for any government to undertake the guidance of public opinion single handed is to invite suspicion of "propaganda" in an age when "the big lie" has been an agent of every totalitarian government. Hence the importance in every democracy of an independent unofficial agency devoted to the study of international affairs, promoting research, disseminating information, and encouraging discussion of a non-partisan character throughout the country. Such agencies as the Royal Institute of International Affairs in the United Kingdom, the Council on Foreign Relations in the United States, and the Canadian Institute of International Affairs are examples of private organizations which are rendering a valuable service to the government and to the community.

Need for Unofficial Agencies

The first two agencies resulted from the experience of the British and United States delegations at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Delegates and advisers alike, such as Colonel House, Dr. Shotwell, Lord Robert Cecil, and Lionel Curtis, were convinced, from their attempts at peace making, that there was urgent need for continuous study of international affairs by unofficial agencies in their respective countries. Dissatisfaction with the results emerging in Paris was a prime factor in this feeling. "Our disappointment is an excellent symptom; let us perpetuate it," said Lord Robert Cecil at the dinner held on May 30, 1919 to discuss the project. Such agencies were necessary to get the facts of international affairs—"our scarcest raw material", as Elihu Root once said—and to encourage the play of informed opinion before government policies were formulated. The decision to found a single Anglo-American Institute of International Affairs "to keep its members in touch with the international situation and enable them to study the relation between national policies and the interests of society as a whole" was not maintained—and no doubt wisely. But there did emerge the two national agencies previously mentioned of which the C.I.I.A. is the Canadian parallel.

The creation of the C.I.I.A. was partly due to these discussions in Paris, since two of its founders, Sir Robert Borden and J. W. Dafoe, who attended the Peace Conference, had kept in touch with the United Kingdom Institute, which had a few members in Canada. This Institute owed its headquarters, Chatham House, to the generosity of Colonel and Mrs. R. W. Leonard of St. Catharines, Ontario. The founding of the C.I.I.A. was also prompted by the experience of a group of Canadians largely drawn from the National Council of the Y.M.C.A. who attended the organizational meeting of the Institute of Pacific Relations at

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