

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

THE WORK OF AN EMBASSY

Address delivered by Mr. Hume Wrong,
Canadian Ambassador in the United States,
at the University College Graduation
Dinner, Toronto, June 6, 1947.

It is just twenty years since, for the second time, I left the University of Toronto, and it is very pleasant to be back once more to see old friends - and to have this opportunity of talking to them without their being given a chance to reply. When I left the University for the first time on my graduation in 1915, it was to go into the army. After a few strenuous years I returned in 1921 as a member of the staff. In 1927 I departed again, to undertake what was to me as novel and unforeseen an occupation as military service had been a dozen years before.

At that time, for all but four or five Canadians, diplomatic service could not have been anything but an experimental venture into the unknown, and I more than half expected to come back to the University after a year's trial. The entire staff of the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa was not then as large as the present staff of the Canadian Embassy in Washington. The Canadian Government was represented abroad only by a High Commissioner in London, an Agent General in Paris, and an Advisory Officer in Geneva. There were Trade Commissioners in a number of countries, but their work was confined to the promotion of Canadian exports. There were also a few immigration agents stationed abroad. Hardly even a minute nucleus for a Canadian diplomatic and consular service had been developed.

When I mention the changes which have taken place in the last twenty years, I hope that you will not be inclined to ascribe them to the alleged tendency of bureaucracies to grow for the sake of growth, in order to enhance their own importance and live happily ever after at the expense of the impoverished tax-payer. There has certainly been in these twenty years a remarkable growth, and I am glad to say that the young Canadian foreign service has acquired a high reputation. I am, indeed, nervous lest its reputation in some quarters is not too high to be either deserved or maintained. I can certify from personal knowledge of nearly all of its members that, whether serving at home or abroad, they are not given to idle ease or luxurious living, and that their daily stint is an honest day's work.

Since 1927 Canadian representation abroad has expanded from the three offices which I have mentioned to over thirty. There are now seven High Commissioners' Offices, thirteen Embassies, six Legations, three special missions (to the United Nations and in Germany and Japan) and five Consular Offices. These offices are scattered throughout the world in twenty-nine different countries. A few more are likely to be opened each year for some time.

Most of these missions are modest in size in comparison with those maintained by countries of comparable standing. For obvious reasons the two largest are Canada House in London and the Canadian Embassy in Washington, while the smallest have a staff of only four or five in all. At the same time the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa has had to expand greatly, and is still - I speak from recent personal experience - over-worked and under-manned.