

WOMEN: ALWAYS DIPLOMATIC AND MORE RECENTLY DIPLOMATS

by Alison Taylor Hardy

Alison Hardy's article appeared in the 1976 summer issue of *International Perspectives*. It has been edited and brought up to date for Liaison readers.

The author herself, is an active, accomplished person. After working at the Ottawa Citizen from 1937 to 1943, she enlisted in the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service and served in various places across Canada. After World War II she joined the Department of External Affairs and had postings to Rio de Janeiro, New York and Washington before retiring in 1975. Since then she has remained extremely active with numerous organizations and is currently the International Affairs Chairperson for the National Council of Women.

The Department of External Affairs was established in 1909 and Mr. Joseph Pope, later Sir Joseph, became Under-Secretary of the fledgling department.

Mr. Pope had been asked by the royal commissioners of the Civil Service about women in the service. (It was difficult at that time, evidently, to get qualified young men to enter the government). He felt that the number of women coming into the service was inordinate. Of their employment, he commented: "Speaking generally, I do not think it desirable, though I know of several exceptions. But I am speaking of the general principle, because I find that as a rule women clerks claim the rights of men and the privileges of their own sex as well."

The commissioners questioned several other deputy ministers as well. The Deputy Minister of Labour, W.L. Mackenzie King,

suggested that it was doubtful whether the young ladies serving in his department as temporary clerks were worth their \$500 annual salary.

The Deputy Minister of the Interior, W.W. Cory, commented that there were some very able women in the service, but he felt that, in the performance of the useful duties assigned to them, they could not rise to a level worth more than an annual salary of \$1,000. The commissioners asked Mr. Cory about the likelihood of political pressure if an exceptionally gifted woman were to be promoted. "...Once you promote a woman," he replied, "if you raise her from one class to another, pressure, both from inside and outside the service, and not necessarily political, is brought to promote other women from the subordinate ranks..."

Before the end of 1909, three young women were working for the Department of External Affairs: Emma Palmer, Grace Rankins and Agnes McCloskey. Miss Palmer had worked in the Secretary of State Department for a number of years and was on loan to the new department. Miss Rankins and Miss McCloskey had had their appointments confirmed after passing entry examinations. The latter had come second in the Dominion in an examination held earlier in the year for Third Division Clerkships.

By 1925, Agnes McCloskey was recognized by the Chief Clerk as a "most capable, clever and energetic clerk...", who "has four clerks assisting her in her work". She subsequently rose to the position of Departmental Accountant and was unofficially known as the "Lady Deputy".



Elizabeth MacCallum, the first Canadian female Chargé d'affaires (Beirut, Lebanon, 1954).

When the Canadian Consulate General was opened in New York during the Second World War, she was appointed a Vice-Consul, the first Canadian woman to serve abroad in that capacity with the Department of External Affairs. In her time, she was one of the very few senior women in the Federal Government service.

Staff expansion in the Department of External Affairs during the 1920s and 1930s was relatively modest, but it did allow for the entry of Lester Bowles Pearson in 1928, the appointment of a new Under-Secretary, Dr. O.D. Skelton, in 1925 and the arrival from Queen's University a year earlier of Marjorie McKenzie as a Stenographer Grade 3. Holder of a bachelor of arts degree and a master of arts in French and German, she was typical of many women who entered the Department at the start of the Second World War, accepting appointments as clerks and stenographers but, in fact, doing the work of officers. They came from universities, from other government departments and agencies and from home. Restrictions on the employment of married women were relaxed during the war.

In 1947, women were allowed for the first time to write the competitive Foreign Service Officer examination. Qualifications on the ground of sex were at last put aside. In 1945, an issue of *Saturday Night* carried an article by Mrs. Cox on Miss McKenzie: "Back in 1930, as a *tour de force*, she wrote the departmental examination for Third Secretary, just to see what she could do, though knowing no woman was eligible for appointment. She wrote a brilliant paper."



Margaret Meagher, Canada's first female ambassador (Israel, 1956), presenting a letter of introduction to Archbishop Makarios.