

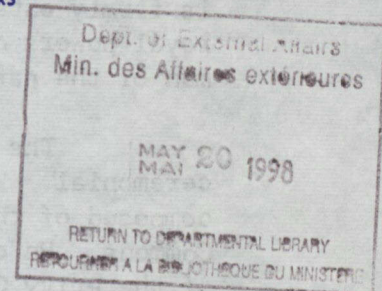
DOC
CA1
EA9
R12
ENG
Feb. 1966

LIBRARY E A / BIBLIOTHÈQUE A E
3 5036 01063887 5

REFERENCE PAPERS



INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA



No. 12
(Revised February 1966)

THE GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Governor General is the representative of the Crown in Canada and is appointed by Her Majesty The Queen on the recommendation of the Canadian Government. The Queen of Canada is the Head of State of Canada but the Governor General, in the Queen's absence, acts on Her Majesty's behalf. The document by which the Queen appoints the Governor General is a Commission of Appointment signed by the Sovereign and counter-signed by the Prime Minister of Canada.

In Canada, as in most other constitutional monarchies, there is a clear division between the political and ceremonial functions of state. The Prime Minister is the political leader of the country, whereas the office of the Governor General is entirely dissociated from any involvement in political controversy.

The present position of the Governor General reflects the constitutional development of Canada. Before the attainment of Canada's full autonomy, the Governor General acted under directions from the British authorities. Though Canada's constitutional development was a gradual process, its present status as an independent nation resulted from the Imperial Conferences of 1926, 1929 and 1930, the conclusions of which were embodied in the Statute of Westminster (1931). This Statute established that members of the Commonwealth were autonomous communities of equal status and in no way subordinate to one another with respect to domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown.

Since 1931, and particularly, since the end of the Second World War, the Commonwealth has undergone a number of changes in its structure. The most notable of these has been the attaining of independence and republican status by a number of Commonwealth countries which, while not retaining the position of Her Majesty as Head of State, have remained within the Commonwealth and recognize the position of the Queen as Head

of the Commonwealth. In the case of countries such as Canada, which retain the position of the Sovereign as Head of State, the principle is firmly established that Her Majesty and the Governor General exercise royal powers on the advice of the Prime Minister (acting as the spokesman of the national government).

The duties of the Governor General are both constitutional and ceremonial. His office is an integral part of Parliament, which is composed of three elements; the Crown, the Senate and the House of Commons. He convokes, prorogues and dissolves Parliament, and members of the Privy Council, including Cabinet Ministers, are sworn in before him or his deputy.

The Governor General must also give his assent on the Queen's behalf to all bills passed by Parliament so that they may become acts of Parliament; otherwise they do not have the force of law. He also signs orders-in-council, commissions and many other state documents.

One of the most important responsibilities of the Governor General is to ensure that the country always has a Prime Minister. If this office becomes vacant because of death, resignation or defeat in the House of Commons, or deadlock following a general election, it is the Governor General's duty to see that the post is filled immediately.

The Governor General is the nation's host to visiting members of the royal family, heads of state and other distinguished visitors and extends hospitality in many forms to great numbers of Canadian citizens. He also receives the letters of credence of heads of mission of non-Commonwealth countries appointed to Canada, and holds investitures.

Travel is an important part of the work of the Governor General. In this way, he gets to know the country and its problems and establishes a close link with the people he serves. The Governor General lends his patronage and support to many organizations such as the Boy Scouts, the Red Cross, St. John's Ambulance, the Royal Canadian Legion and the Victorian Order of Nurses, and, through his interest, is able to do much to help their work. His speeches on national and civic occasions and to groups of all kinds encourage and stimulate thought on many important subjects such as the arts, charity, education and sports.

The Crown in Canada has a profound influence on the character of the nation. Canada and the Commonwealth nations of the Caribbean are the only countries in the Americas that have a monarchical form of government. It is the Governor General's task to preserve and enhance the prestige of the Crown and to strengthen the ties between it and the people of Canada.