



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 50/2

THE CONDUCT OF CANADIAN DIPLOMACY

An address by Mr. A.D.P. Heeney,
Under-Secretary of State for
External Affairs, delivered to
the Canadian Club in Toronto,
on January, 30, 1950.

There is a strong tradition in British countries that civil servants do not make speeches on subjects of public controversy, in the sphere of politics at least. This is a sound tradition and one which for the most part is honoured in this country. But that is no reason, as I see it, why public officials should not take opportunities such as this to explain what we're doing for our living - for your money - and in so doing, to describe to such as will listen, the work of our departments of Government.

For my part, I welcome this chance to address the Toronto Canadian Club on "The Conduct of Canadian Diplomacy", in fact about the Department of External Affairs.

In speaking about my Department, I am, in one way, more fortunate than many of my colleagues in the Civil Service. For the conduct of Canada's external affairs, Canada's foreign policy, is not, in the ordinary sense, a matter of party politics. It is, I think, true to say that the Government's policies in external matters are Canadian policies supported by the members of all political parties. Of course, to some extent politicians are at variance in these matters. But when they vary, it is usually in the emphasis they give to aspects of policy rather than in substance. Of course, the Government may be criticized for its administration or for its conduct in certain situations. But, speaking generally, foreign policy is not a subject upon which Canadians are divided. And the last session of Parliament demonstrated a remarkable degree of unanimity on the major issues with which this nation is confronted in her contacts with the outside world.

Nevertheless, I have not come before you to discuss policy. That is the business of Ministers - at any rate, of politicians - it is not the business of bureaucrats. Rather I propose to draw attention to some of the reasons why Canada needs a diplomatic service, and to describe to you something of the working machinery of Canadian diplomacy.

For what purpose does Canada maintain Embassies and Legations and High Commissioners' Offices in some thirty-three countries all over the world? What returns do the Canadian people receive for the not inconsiderable sums which Parliament has voted these past few years for the Department of External

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affairs? Ambassadors, Ministers Plenipotentiary, High Commissioners, Counsellors, Consuls General, First, Second and Third Secretaries, what do these fellows do for the living provided them from the public Treasury? What is this business of diplomacy? That, indeed, are we getting for our diplomatic dollar?

The term "diplomacy" is a curious one. In the course of years, centuries I suppose, it has come to mean something rather fancy and, at the same time, something almost sinister. To some it conjures up a sparkling round of luxurious and exotic social occasions; for others it still implies circumstances of mystery, even melodrama, secret treaties, secret papers, the whole Oppenheim paraphernalia, an atmosphere of elaborate costumes and exaggerated manners, perhaps a faint air of decadence.

The fact is, of course, that diplomacy is merely the conduct of affairs, the carrying on of business, between nations. "International affairs" nowadays takes in almost every imaginable subject from potatoes to peace. Distances have been rolled up by modern transport. Geography has become indivisible. For better or for worse, all nations have become neighbours, good or bad. The world has become a very small and a very busy, worried place. What is more, governments all over the world, whatever their political and economic theories, are now doing themselves many of the things which, in the old days, used to be left to individuals and to private concerns. Finally, the position of Canada among the nations has grown, grown enormously these past dozen years and more. And that growth has brought with it new and heavier responsibilities.

Of course, departments other than External Affairs have contacts with outside countries. The Department of Trade and Commerce encourages and facilitates the growth of Canada's external trade through some forty-five offices in thirty-eight countries. I feel sure that the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service is well known to many of you. It is a well-established and efficient Service with which we in External Affairs are happy to work in the closest co-operation. Agriculture, Immigration, Labour, other departments as well have representatives in a number of countries for their own special purposes. But the general responsibility for Canada's day-to-day business with other nations is that of the Department of External Affairs. It is the Minister of External Affairs who has to answer to the Government, as the Government must answer to Parliament, for the conduct of Canada's relations with all "external" Governments, Commonwealth as well as foreign. It is the officers of External Affairs, the diplomats, who have this general responsibility under the Minister. For this reason we have, as well, the duty of co-ordinating the work of all other Canadian agencies who have business in other lands.

Perhaps the best way for me to give you a more precise understanding of what makes up Canadian diplomacy is to give a few illustrations of what our External Affairs officers - our diplomats - do, in the East Block in Ottawa and in our "branch offices" abroad.

Broadly, our work is of two kinds. The first of these may be called, simply and accurately, reporting. We have to report to our Minister and to the Government on conditions and events abroad. Second, we have to carry out the Government's decisions and do what we can to advance Canadian policies in Canada's relations with other countries.

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Let me explain what I mean by reporting. I mean the collection and interpretation of information about what other governments in the world are doing, or what they are likely to do, which may have some effect, good or bad, on Canada, on Canadians. I mean letting the Government know, promptly and accurately, about events in other countries - happenings - the knowledge and appreciation of which will enable our Government to make intelligent and informed decisions. Let me give one or two topical examples. What is taking place today in China? How will these events likely affect Canada, the safety and the freedom of action of Canadian missions in that far country, the prospects of Canadian trade the extension of Canadian aviation in the Far East? What attitude are the British, the Americans, the Indians taking toward the new Communist regime?

In a matter such as this difficult and complex Chinese question, the Department has a number of sources to tap, our Embassy in Nanking and the news and views of our remaining officers there and in the Consulate General in Shanghai; Canada House in London and our Washington Embassy; our High Commissioners in New Delhi and Karachi and our offices in other countries having interests and experience in the Far East. We have, too, the advantage of direct contact in Ottawa with the representatives of many of the countries principally concerned.

All of this information, from these various sources, is gathered and analyzed in the Department in Ottawa. For what purpose? So that our Minister and the Government may, in the light of such information and advice, make decisions, adopt policies. What should Canadian shippers do about the Nationalist blockade of the Yangtse? Should Canadian representatives in China deal with the Communist authorities, do business with them? Would recognition of the new regime by Canada and other friendly powers strengthen the Soviet bloc? Would it hasten and heighten the surge of Russian imperialism into all of South East Asia, or would the long deferment of recognition isolate us from the Chinese people, exclude from China all genuine democratic influences? Where is the balance of advantage from the Canadian point of view? What does our information indicate as the right policy in the national interest?

One could give many other examples from the continuous flow of reports which come in to the Department. What is the nature of the military assistance which the United States is likely to give to North Atlantic countries? Under what conditions, financial and otherwise, will such aid be made available? How will this affect Canada, our dollar position, our joint undertakings with the United States for North American defence? Will the United States Services be able to make purchases of military supplies from Canadian factories? How can the Canadian interest, the Canadian situation in these circumstances best be put to the United States administration, to Congressional leaders? What arrangements are being made by Britain to obtain agricultural products from soft currency countries? What does this mean for the Canadian food contracts in terms of Canadian agricultural and commercial policies? Or again, what effect upon Canada's overseas trade is to be expected from the closer integration of European economies of which we now hear so much? What form is such integration likely to take? What are the views in London? In Paris? In Belgium and Holland?

Upon these and many other questions the Government expect to receive, and do receive, up-to-date reports and advice,

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wherever Canadian interests are involved or are likely to be affected. This work of reporting goes on day after day, indeed day and night. Telegrams, despatches and personal reports flow in to the East Block from our offices abroad and from our contacts with other Governments through their offices in Ottawa and elsewhere. Ambassadors, Ministers and High Commissioners come back from their posts and tell us what they have seen, what they have heard, what they have learned, from their own observations on the spot. At the same time, the process of analyzing, interpreting and consolidating goes on in the twelve divisions which make up the Department of External Affairs.

On the basis of these reports made by the Department, the Minister and the Government make their decisions and develop the policies which govern Canada's relations with other countries. For this reason the task of reporting is probably the most important work of the Department. For it is these reports which are the material from which Canada's foreign policy is made.

The other major task of our diplomats is to carry out the decisions taken by the Government and to advance Canadian interests in our relations with other countries in accordance with policies approved by the Government.

Thus, much of the time and energy of our officers is taken up with negotiating with other Governments under instructions from the Minister or the Cabinet. Negotiations between Governments are normally carried on by diplomats. For the most part, negotiations between countries are very like the negotiations which go on before a deal is closed in private business. It is true that sometimes there is rather more formality. But sometimes there is a good deal less.

Diplomatic negotiations have to do with a wide range of subjects from the important to the trivial. Many of us believe that the North Atlantic Treaty may mean the difference between peace and war in our generation. Canadian public men have rightly been given a large measure of credit for laying the groundwork of that historic pact. What is less known is that Canadian diplomats had a great deal to do with bringing the Treaty to the point of signature. Before it was finally agreed and signed with due solemnity in April of last year, there were many long weeks of negotiations between representatives of the western nations. Canadian diplomats worked and sweated for many hundreds of hours with their colleagues from Britain, the United States and the other countries of the Alliance, before a text was produced which met the desires and necessities of all. The North Atlantic community has emerged as the most significant achievement of western foreign policy in recent years. But there will still be many more weary hours of discussion, proposal and counter proposal, draft and redraft, of negotiation in fact between diplomats, before the work of North Atlantic organization is complete.

Diplomatic negotiations may be concerned with much less important and exciting things than multilateral treaties and alliances. They may be merely bilateral, that is, seeking agreement between only two nations. For example, not many months ago, negotiations with the United States Government resulted in a new agreement between the two Governments concerning civil aviation. In this case, the conclusion of the agreement does not seem to have terminated the negotiations! Or again, negotiations

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by our diplomats may affect one or two Canadian businesses or only individual Canadians. There may be some here who will remember that, a few years ago, timely diplomatic intervention prevented the exclusion of certain important Canadian corporations from carrying on business in a certain Latin American country. I recall a case not long ago in which one of our offices abroad engaged in a long series of interviews and correspondence with the officials of a foreign Government in order to obtain the release from gaol of a single Canadian citizen. This poor fellow had fallen foul of that country's laws. It was a pathetic case; he had served most of his time in a penitentiary and had contracted a fatal disease. But, being a foreign national, he was not eligible for parole in the normal course. Our Embassy in that country was able, at length, to obtain the man's release and permit him to be brought home to die - as a result again of negotiations.

Then our offices abroad have the duty of keeping other governments informed of Canadian interests and opinions on a wide range of subjects. Why? So that, if another Government is contemplating legislation or other action which might affect Canadians, for example, changes in some tax laws or import restrictions, or in some regulation concerning border crossing, this Government would proceed only in full knowledge that they were helping or hindering their trade and relations with us.

Our offices abroad are also expected to provide information about Canada to the peoples of the countries in which they are located. This we try to accomplish not by elaborate propaganda, nor by costly publicity. The facts about Canada and Canadian life, in printed or spoken word, in pictures or in films, these are made available to those who will use them. The means are modest but the results of our public information work abroad are, I believe, important in practical terms of our external relations. In some of our larger posts like London, Washington, and Paris, special information officers are employed; these devote their full time to public information work.

The whole range of Consular work constitutes another large element in the daily activities of the Department in Canada and in other countries. It is here perhaps that many of you may have run across us. You want a passport for travel abroad or you wish to enquire about a visa to permit you to enter a foreign country; or you want to arrange representation for Canadian interests in a foreign land; or for the repatriation of the crew of a vessel that has been paid off in a distant port. Perhaps you want to find out why a friend of yours has been taken off the "Queen Mary" and is being held at Ellis Island. The protection of the interests of individual Canadians abroad is the job of our Consular Division.

Finally, Canadian diplomats are required to represent Canada abroad on all sorts of occasions. Some of these occasions are fun but most are not. Some are formal, some are exceedingly informal. These occasions vary all the way from the coronation of a monarch or inauguration of a President to the simplest of gatherings - a "Canada Day" or a "United Nations' Day" at a Kiwanis Club in Connecticut or a High School in Illinois, or perhaps a hockey match in Prague. From a national point of view many of such occasions have some importance, some have little, or perhaps even none. But whatever the occasion may be, if Canada is to be represented, the Department and its branch offices must be ready with a suitable body. Some of these affairs are no doubt entertaining for the officer involved, but I can assure you many are not. There is one side of diplomatic life which people outside very often do not appreciate. That is the extent

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of the personal inconvenience which must be accepted by every Foreign Service Officer because of his liability to be moved all over the world - and often at short notice. There is glamour in the idea of a life spent in the capitals of the nations - and no doubt the opportunities for varied experience are attractive. But I am afraid that the chief impression on the mind of the individual officer - and his wife and family too - is that made by the endless and exhausting problems of housing and schooling and the thousand and one personal difficulties involved in adaptation to new and often strange ways of life. When the diplomat is moved, he and his family may just have found their feet in a sympathetic environment. They must go to a new post knowing that, in all likelihood, they may well be on their way once more before they have had a chance to become a real part of the new community. The other day I said good-bye to one of our officers, who, with his wife and three young children, had lived in five capital cities during the last ten years. This was an unusual example for we would not normally ask anyone to change posts as often. But willingness to accept such changes is a characteristic, a necessary condition of the job. To the persons concerned it is pretty exciting often enough; but more often it is the personal inconveniences that predominate. No, it's not all champagne and caviar - no, nor even beer and skittles!

My account of our affairs would not be complete if I failed to say something of our work in connection with international conferences. Part of the work in relation to these meetings comes under the heading of reporting; part under the heading of carrying out government decisions and advancing the external policies of our country.

When I tell you that in 1949 the External Affairs Department participated in no less than 130 formal conferences and meetings of one kind or another, you will recognize that these affairs occupy no small proportion of our time. The principal reason for this, of course, is the rapid increase in recent years in the number of international organizations and the number of international meetings in which Canadian representation is required.

These organizations and meetings vary very widely in importance and the amount of work they involve for us diplomats. At one extreme there are the annual United Nations Assemblies. For these, long and detailed preparatory work is required and a delegation staff of fifty or more have to be lifted from their normal duties in the Department for two or three months. At the other end of the scale are the numerous relatively small meetings, often of brief duration, between the representatives of two or three nations. For these no elaborate preparations are needed and often one or two Canadian representatives suffice.

ECOSOC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO - all the other specialized alphabetical agencies of the United Nations; the projected International Trade Organization and the detailed multilateral tariff negotiations involved in GATT; the new committees formed under the North Atlantic Treaty; the Commonwealth meetings of which we have just had another in far-off Colombo; three-cornered talks with our British and American friends on financial and other problems; two-sided committees like that on Trade and Economic Affairs with the United Kingdom and the Joint Defence Board with the United States - I think that, almost literally, I could go on all afternoon merely cataloging such bodies and their works. But I have mentioned enough, perhaps, to illustrate how, of recent years, the growth of international organizations

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has added to the task of the External Affairs Department, to the volume of Canadian diplomacy.

To provide a continuous reporting service to Government on a world-wide basis; to carry into effect Government decisions and policies on an immense range of subjects; to participate in scores of international meetings - here, surely, is no idle, no fancy diplomacy. I can assure you that we have enough to do. Any notion that I may once have entertained of the gilded leisure of diplomatic life has been long dispelled. The Canadian Foreign Service Officer has little time (if indeed, he has any inclination) to "go diplomatic".

To do this job, to conduct your affairs, Canada's affairs, with the nations of the world we have in the Department of External Affairs in all some 1,250 men and women. These are divided about equally between those who serve at home and those who serve in the forty-four offices that we maintain abroad in thirty-three different countries.

The officers of the Department - there are some 240 of them in Ottawa and abroad - have been recruited by competitive examination from the universities across Canada. They represent every province. A good proportion of them have French as their maternal tongue, a contribution in itself to the working bilingualism which is of such value in international business. Most of our officers, like the Department itself, are young; most of them young men, for so far, I regret to say, only a few are young women. There are not many who are over fifty. Time will correct this, for like other Civil Servants, we are bound to the wheel till we reach sixty-five.

Although our entrance examinations are well-known in academic circles to be tough, we try not to put undue emphasis on purely academic attainments. So far we have, I think, avoided the danger which seems to beset Foreign Offices of developing a recognizable diplomatic "type". Toronto University may claim especially large representation among our officers, but I doubt that its share of appointments has been much out of proportion to its relative size. In any event, there is as yet no Canadian equivalent of Eton and Christ Church or of Groton and Harvard. The Department is now large enough and the tasks that have to be done sufficiently varied to require a variety of talents. Our debt to the teaching profession, from Dr. Skelton's time to the present, is a heavy one. I do not for a moment underrate it. But the growth of the Service and the consequent variety of our tasks has called for other capacities as well. And these have been forthcoming in the candidates that have been presenting themselves in recent years. Among them the large number of young veterans of the last war have been outstanding. We are trying to take account of these things in our entrance examinations.

In 1939 a total of 208 officers and other employees were employed by External Affairs, and Canada maintained eleven offices abroad. In ten years the number of employees has increased by six times and the number of offices outside Canada has been multiplied by four. This is an immense development even for periods of world war and reconstruction. It was, of course, the direct result of these abnormal conditions. However, we have now, I believe, very nearly completed this stage of expansion. I would expect that the numbers of new diplomatic missions that Canada would need to open would be few and that, from now on, the increases in our home establishment would be modest. This will

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enable us to concentrate on the consolidation and improvement of what we have. Indeed that process of consolidation has now begun. Canada need have no ambition to ape the big Powers, nor to extend her diplomatic activities for the mere sake of prestige. I can assure you that there is no disposition in any responsible quarter, certainly not in the Department of External Affairs, to open more "branches" than are absolutely necessary. Nor indeed have we any desire to take in any more territory in any sense beyond what is required by the necessities of the case and the proven interests of the country.

Mr. President, I have tried in my remarks to draw a matter-of-fact picture of the Canadian Foreign Service, to give a brief but down-to-earth account of what Canadian diplomats do with their time - for your money. In fact, I have tried to expose some of the brass tacks of Canadian diplomacy. I regard it as an honour to be the permanent head of the Department of Government which conducts your affairs with other nations. And, since I can take no credit for their virtues (for I have been associated directly with the Department for less than a year), you will permit me, I know, to express some pride in the young Canadians who make up our diplomatic team. I sincerely believe that for industry, intelligence and patriotism, the men and women of External Affairs have nothing to fear from comparison with any other organization, public or private, in this or any other country.

The great issues of national and international security, of peace and war, of the survival or submergence of the free way of life; these will not be determined by Canadian diplomacy. But, in the struggle to solve these immense problems, Canada has a part to play which is by no means insignificant in the Councils of the Nations. I believe that your servants in these tasks are not unworthy of their trust.

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