



# REFERENCE PAPERS

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
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## THE DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

### Historical Background

The growing importance of Canada in world affairs during the forty years after Confederation made it desirable, by the early 1900's, that she should adopt an organized method of conducting her affairs with other countries.

The first suggestion that a separate department be established for this purpose came from Sir Joseph Pope, then Under-Secretary of State, in 1907. In a memorandum to a Royal Commission on the Civil Service he recommended a more efficient method of dealing with the external affairs of Canada.

His memorandum noted that there did not exist a complete record of correspondence on any matter of external bearing. Individual departments concerned with such matters communicated with other governments through the Governor General, without reference to one another. This practice, on more than one occasion, caused inconsistencies to be brought to the attention of the Canadian government by foreign governments.

In May, 1909, Parliament authorized the establishment of a "Department of External Affairs". The title indicates that it deals with Canada's relations with other governments within the British Commonwealth as well as with foreign powers. The Act creating the Department placed it under the Secretary of State, with an Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to rank as the permanent deputy head of the Department.

Before the establishment of the Department a High Commissioner had been appointed to represent Canada in London (from 1880) and an Agent General in France (from 1882), neither of whom had diplomatic status. In addition Canada was represented abroad in the closing years of the nineteenth century by trade commissioners and immigration officials. They were appointees of individual departments of the Canadian government and did not enjoy diplomatic status. Negotiations with foreign countries were conducted through the British Foreign Office and dealings with other parts of the Empire through the Colonial Office, with Canadian representatives frequently included in negotiations. Canadian interests abroad were handled by British diplomatic and consular authorities. All communications to other governments were made through the Governor General, who at that time represented both the King and the Government of the United Kingdom.

The establishment of the Department brought no constitutional change. The Governor General continued to be the official channel of communication. But whereas individual departments formerly had sent despatches directly



to other governments through the Governor General and incoming communications had been received through him, all despatches were henceforth sent to the Governor General through the Secretary of State as head of the Department. Incoming communications were referred by the Governor General's secretary to the Secretary of State and in some cases to the Prime Minister before being passed on to the government department concerned. Each department dealing with other countries thereafter provided the Department of External Affairs with full information. Thus the Department acted as a centralizing agency through which all communications passed.

In 1912 an act was passed placing the Department directly under the Prime Minister, and from April 1 of that year he held the additional portfolio of Secretary of State for External Affairs. The appointment of a separate minister for the Department was considered from time to time, but no action was taken until March, 1946, when a bill was introduced to repeal the section of the Act of 1912 which provided that the Prime Minister was to be the Secretary of State for External Affairs. The bill was passed on April 2 and five months later, on September 4, 1946, the announcement was made of the appointment of the first separate Secretary of State for External Affairs.

### Early Years

The Department began with a modest staff consisting of the Under-Secretary, two chief clerks and four clerks. The first decade of its existence was a period of inconspicuous development.

The first important step came in 1919 when Canada won separate representation as a nation at the Paris Peace Conference. This achievement marked the end of the traditional "diplomatic unity of the Empire" and the beginning of Canada's growth as a power in international affairs.

The gradual recognition of Canadian autonomy in international affairs and the growth of Canadian responsibilities abroad made expansion inevitable. After 1920 it became increasingly apparent that Canada's interests could no longer be conveniently handled by the British diplomatic and consular authorities. The new Department began to develop into an agency for the direct administration of Canada's external affairs.

In 1921 the Office of the High Commissioner in London was placed under the control of the Department. In 1923, in connection with a Halibut Fishery treaty with the United States, Canada, for the first time, asserted and exercised her right to negotiate and sign her own treaties. In 1925 a Canadian Advisory Officer was stationed in Geneva to represent Canada at various conferences and to inform the Canadian Government of the activities of the League of Nations and of the International Labour Office.

A further advance in the Department's development came as the result of an agreement reached at the Imperial Conference of 1926, by which the Governor General ceased to represent the Government of the United Kingdom and became the personal representative of the King. This brought about two changes: (1) as the United Kingdom Government was now without a representative in Canada it



appointed a High Commissioner to represent it at Ottawa; (2) after July 1, 1927, correspondence from governments was addressed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs instead of to the Governor General.

All official external communications now are channelled through the Department of External Affairs, although decisions may be made by the Government or by the departments directly concerned. There is normally no direct intercourse between any outside government and any department of the federal or any provincial government in Canada. Communications requiring action by provincial governments are passed on by the Department of External Affairs to the Office of the Secretary of State for Canada, whence they are forwarded to their destination. Replies from provincial governments utilize the same channel.

### Representation Abroad

Before 1926 Canada had no diplomatic representatives abroad, although as early as 1920 it was announced that a minister would be appointed to Washington. The appointment was made in 1926 and the first Canadian Legation was opened in Washington early in 1927. This was followed in 1928 by the appointment of a Canadian minister to serve in Paris and in 1929 by the opening of a legation in Tokyo. At about the same time the United States, France and Japan opened legations in Ottawa.

The expansion of the service was interrupted during the depression of the 1930's. The three years of rapid expansion from 1926 to 1929 were followed by another decade of consolidation. The next step in the exchange of diplomatic representation abroad was taken when Belgium sent a minister to Ottawa in 1937 and the Canadian Government appointed a minister in January, 1939, to Belgium and the Netherlands.

With the outbreak of World War II it became imperative that Canada should have more intimate contacts with other members of the British Commonwealth and with many foreign countries as well. The day after Canada's separate declaration of war (September 10, 1939) it was announced that the Canadian Government would send High Commissioners to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Ireland. The Commonwealth Governments reciprocated. The list was made complete (except for India) in 1941 when a High Commissioner was appointed to Newfoundland, a step which recognized the importance of that country to the defence of Canada.

The increasing magnitude of Canada's war effort and the desire to strengthen the concept of the United Nations led to a rapid increase of diplomatic exchanges with foreign countries. In 1942 Canada sent ministers to the U.S.S.R. and China. During the war, also, Canada had a single minister accredited to a number of the Allied governments then functioning in London - Belgium, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Norway, Poland and Yugoslavia - and received ministers from each of them in Ottawa. After the liberation of France this minister moved to Paris with the rank of ambassador. Separate missions are now established in the capitals of all these countries.

Diplomatic relations with Latin America were also a wartime development. In 1941 Canadian legations were opened



in Brazil and Argentina and these countries sent their first ministers to Ottawa. Diplomatic representatives were sent to Chile in 1942, to Mexico and Peru in 1944 and to Cuba in 1945. The decision to open missions in Latin America was based not only on the development of intra-American trade but on the conviction that a closer understanding was necessary to the solution of common problems.

During the war Canada participated in the general trend towards the elevation of legations to embassies. In 1943 most of its large missions abroad were raised to the rank of embassy and certain new missions established after that time were given the rank of embassy from the beginning.

Canada's external service has continued to expand since the war. An embassy has been opened in Turkey and legations in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland, and representatives of these countries have been received in Ottawa.

High Commissioners have been exchanged in recent months between India and Canada, and it is expected that arrangements for a similar exchange with Pakistan will be completed in the near future.

Membership in the United Nations has increased Canada's responsibilities outside her own borders. Canada has been represented on the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission since April, 1946, by a small delegation serving during the period of her membership. After her election to the Security Council in September, 1947, a Permanent Canadian Delegation was established in New York in January, 1948, the head of which represents Canada on both bodies. In addition to representation on these permanent bodies, Canada has sent representatives to a large number of international conferences in recent years, and members of the Department have served on many international committees.

Unlike many other countries, Canada developed its diplomatic service before establishing a consular corps. The first Canadian consulates were opened in 1940 and 1941 in Greenland and in St. Pierre and Miquelon in order to allow the Canadian government to keep in touch with developments in the critical sea approaches to the northern coasts of America. These were both temporary wartime offices, though the office in Godthaab did not close until 1946.

In 1943 a consulate-general was opened in New York to co-ordinate and supervise Canada's increasing interests in that area of the United States. A vice-consulate was opened in Portland, Maine, in 1945 and a consulate-general in Chicago in November, 1947. A further extension of consular offices in the United States is expected within the next few years.

To-day the external service of Canada consists of the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa and the following establishments abroad:

(a) Embassies in: Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, China, France, Greece, Mexico, The Netherlands, Peru, Turkey, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and United States of America;

(b) Legations in: Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Norway, Denmark, Luxembourg, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland;



- (c) High Commissioners' Offices in: Australia, India, Ireland, Newfoundland, New Zealand, Union of South Africa and United Kingdom;
- (d) Consulates-General in: New York and Chicago (U.S.A.), Portugal, Venezuela;
- (e) Vice-Consulate in: Portland, Me. (U.S.A.);
- (f) Military Mission in: Germany;
- (g) Canadian Liaison Mission in: Japan;
- (h) Canadian Permanent Delegation to: The United Nations.

#### Functions of the Department

The main functions of the Department of External Affairs include:

(a) the supervision of relations between Canada and other countries and of Canadian participation in international organizations; the protection of Canadian interests abroad;

(b) the collation and weighing of information regarding developments likely to affect Canada's international relations;

(c) correspondence with other governments and their representatives in Canada;

(d) the negotiation and conclusion of treaties and other international agreements;

(e) the representation of Canada in foreign capitals and at international councils.

#### Departmental Organization at Ottawa

Headquarters of the Department at Ottawa is the East Block of the Parliament Buildings.

The staff is headed by an Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs with an Associate and two Assistant Under-Secretaries. They are assisted by officers of various ranks formally designated in the diplomatic list as Counsellor, First, Second and Third Secretary, from senior to junior. For administrative purposes within the Department they are less formally known as Foreign Service Officers.

With the rapid expansion of Canadian representation abroad the work of the Department at Ottawa has increased correspondingly. It is at present carried on in eleven divisions organized largely on a functional basis.

There are three geographical divisions: the British Commonwealth, the European and the American and Far Eastern Divisions. They work under the direct supervision of an Assistant Under Secretary and deal with all matters which are not the primary concern of one of the other divisions of the Department. In addition they are consulted on the political aspects of matters which are primarily legal, economic, consular, or so on, and have a



general responsibility for co-ordinating the various aspects of Canadian policy in the countries and areas under their jurisdiction.

The United Nations Division deals with matters relating to international conferences and organizations, especially the United Nations and the specialized agencies. Its chief function is to co-ordinate the work of other divisions of the Department and other Departments of the Government so far as this work is concerned with the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

The Economic Division deals with all financial, commercial and general economic questions which have international implications. It is therefore responsible for the work carried out by the Department in connection with commercial and financial treaties and agreements, treatment of foreign assets in Canada and of Canadian assets abroad, programmes of relief or assistance to foreign countries, foreign loans, requests for various commodities in short supply, international civil aviation, telecommunications, shipping, and exchange and balance of payments problems. Co-ordination of policy is secured by co-operation with the Departments of Finance, Trade and Commerce, Agriculture and Transport, the Bank of Canada, the Foreign Exchange Control Board and the Wartime Prices and Trade Board. Relations with certain international agencies in the economic field are also the responsibility of the Economic Division.

The Protocol Division deals with all matters of diplomatic protocol, precedence, privileges and immunities. It arranges the accrediting of Canadian diplomatic and consular representatives abroad and of similar representatives of other countries in Canada. It arranges for visits to Canada of foreign heads of state and extends to them government hospitality. It deals with foreign honours and awards.

The function of the Legal Division is to supervise the legal side of Canada's relations with other states. It examines the constitutional position in Canada with respect to all international undertakings, maintaining close liaison with the Department of Justice on questions of this nature. Its duties also include the registration of treaties and international agreements and the publication and presentation of these to Parliament. It assists in the preparation of treaties and in their subsequent interpretation and application.

The Information Division's chief function is to provide information on Canada to meet the needs of the missions abroad and provide background information for foreign writers and students. Its external work was considerably expanded in February, 1947, when the Canadian Information Service was brought into the Department. The Division issues and distributes abroad such publications (formerly produced by C.I.S.) as daily and weekly news bulletins, reference papers, feature articles, biographies and occasional booklets or folders to meet specific needs. Graphic material and photographs are also distributed. The Division assists visitors and journalists from abroad to obtain information on Canada; answers a large volume of inquiries from abroad; and handles press arrangements, when necessary, for Canadian delegations to the United Nations and other international conferences. It is also responsible for departmental press



conferences and press releases in Ottawa. Certain aspects of cultural relations with other countries, including correspondence on matters relating to education and the fine arts, the arrangement of art exhibits, and the provision of adequate libraries for missions abroad, come under its supervision. Through an Inter-Departmental Committee, liaison is maintained with the other government departments concerned with distributing Canadian information abroad: the National Film Board, the C.B.C. International Service, the National Gallery and three divisions of the Department of Trade and Commerce (Trade Publicity, the Exhibition Commission and the Travel Bureau).

The Consular Division is responsible for the conduct of all consular matters. It instructs Foreign Service and Consular Officers in consular duties when serving at home and directs them in such duties when serving abroad. It assists the Personnel Division to recruit Consular Officers as necessary. It makes recommendations concerning the expansion of the Canadian Consular Service and the formulation of policies related thereto.

The Personnel Division is responsible, under the Personnel and Planning Board, for the training and posting to various divisions in Ottawa and the missions abroad of all personnel employed by the Department. The Personnel and Planning Board, with the Under-Secretary as Chairman, considers all matters affecting the disposition, training, promotion and general administration of personnel affairs. The Personnel Division attends to the representation of the Department on Examining Boards set up by the Civil Service Commission for the recruitment of staff for the Department; interviews candidates for positions in the Department; maintains records of personnel; and is concerned with a variety of matters relating to the welfare of members of the Department.

The finances of the Department are handled in the Administrative Division, which also looks after salaries, living allowances, the purchase of property and related matters, in addition to carrying out the regular work of administering Civil Service regulations at home and abroad.

### The Missions Abroad

Canada's missions abroad are an integral part of the Department. Heads of missions report to the Secretary of State for External Affairs and receive their instructions from him.

The diplomatic staff of an embassy or a legation consists of the Ambassador or Minister assisted by one or more diplomatic officers.

In places where there is sufficient consular work a consular officer is attached to the mission; otherwise this work is done by one of the Secretaries. Where there is a consulate alone it operates under the general supervision of the mission head in that country, while receiving detailed instructions from the Consular Division at Ottawa.

Part of the mission's work is to distribute information about Canada. In New York, Washington, London, Paris, and Canberra information officers, working under the Information Division at Ottawa, are attached to the mission for this



purpose. In other places it is the task of one of the Secretaries, and where there are no diplomatic representatives the trade commissioner or other Canadian government official stationed in the country does this work.

In some cases officers of other departments of the Canadian government -- commercial secretaries, military, naval, air ~~or~~ special attachés -- are attached to the mission. Though responsible to their own departmental head in Ottawa they also work under the general supervision and direction of the head of the mission.

The work of a mission abroad is:

- (a) to conduct negotiations with the government to which it is accredited;
- (b) to keep the home government fully informed of political developments and significant matters in that country;
- (c) to watch over Canada's interests in the country in which it is serving;
- (d) to serve Canadians in the country;
- (e) to act as an information bureau on Canadian affairs.

A constant flow of despatches keeps the missions and the Department in Ottawa in close touch on all such matters.

#### Qualifications for the Service

Those entering the external service of Canada do so on a career basis under the merit system. Only British subjects who have resided at least ten years in Canada are eligible for admission.

The basic qualification for the diplomatic service is a University degree with, preferably, post-graduate study in political science, history, economics or law. Examinations are held periodically by the Civil Service Commission and consist of three parts: a written test, a rating on the basis of education and experience and an oral examination. The written test for the position of Third Secretary or Foreign Service Officer, Grade 1, consists of essay and précis writing and papers on such subjects as international affairs, international law, economics, political and social science and modern history. The oral examination is designed to disclose personal suitability and knowledge of modern languages.

As in other government departments veterans are given preference in all appointments.

The higher posts of High Commissioner, Minister and Ambassador are filled by appointment. Appointees are normally "career men" who have come up through the Civil Service, but in some cases distinguished citizens are appointed directly from private life.

Only recently have women been admitted to the Canadian diplomatic service on the same basis as men. During the war of 1939-45 a limited number of qualified women were admitted to the Department to do the work of Third Secretary, but though their position as officers was recognized within



the Department they were not granted diplomatic status and were not, in general, eligible for service abroad. Exceptions were the appointment of two women to posts abroad, one with consular and one with local diplomatic rank. The first open competition in which women were permitted to compete was held in July, 1947, and appointments of women with full diplomatic status have since been made.

As Canada's interests multiply in the international field, the work of the Department continues to grow. To meet these increased responsibilities, the Department now has in Ottawa and abroad a total of more than 170 officers and 800 clerical personnel.

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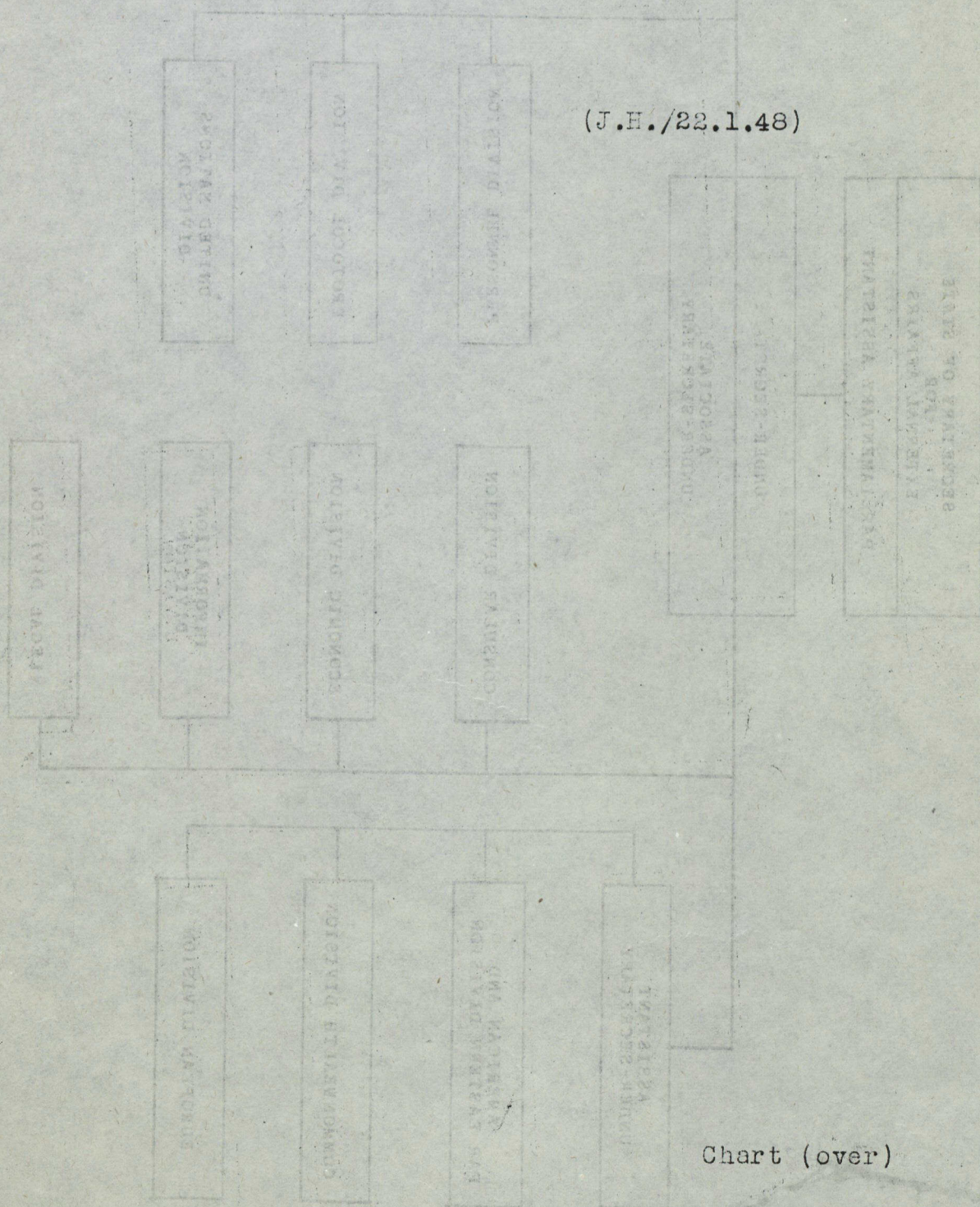


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