

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
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THE WORK OF AN EMBASSY

Address delivered by Mr. Hume Wrong,
Canadian Ambassador in the United States,
at the University College Graduation
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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.

By far the greatest part of the expansion has occurred since the outbreak of war in 1939. Over half of it has taken place within the last three years. Basically, the cause is the increased international importance of Canada. This has brought to the Canadian Government the necessity - not always a welcome one - of reaching decisions of policy on a whole new range of international problems, and therefore of developing its own means of securing the information and advice on which informed decisions must be based.

Expansion of representation abroad is far from being a purely Canadian phenomenon. Every country in the world, except the former enemy countries, has enormously increased its staffs abroad and the size of its foreign office at home. The monthly list published by the State Department of the members of diplomatic missions in Washington is now a substantial little volume of nearly 200 pages. When I first went there in 1927, it was about one-third that size. I doubt that the Canadian increase in representatives abroad since 1939 is proportionately larger than that of the United Kingdom, the United States, or many other countries. The increase, however, is beginning to taper off. I am afraid that a very large number of the many students at Toronto and at other Canadian Universities who have shown their desire to join the External Affairs Service are doomed to disappointment.

I wish, however, to talk this evening particularly about my own job and about the Canadian Embassy in Washington. I am the seventh Ambassador or Minister to head that mission; and on this occasion I may be permitted to note that, of the seven, four are graduates of the University of Toronto, and two of them of University College; two of my predecessors have been for many years Governors of the University; and the second in command in Washington now holding the rank of Minister at the Embassy, is also a graduate of University College. Of course, the founder of the Canadian foreign service, who presided over the Department of External Affairs for nearly twenty years between 1921 and last September, the Prime Minister of Canada, is himself an eminent graduate of University College.

I do not suggest that this preponderance of Toronto graduates arises from the superior merits of the training which they received, still less that it is caused by any deliberate preference. Indeed, in view of the aspersions often cast on Toronto from Halifax to Vancouver, one might almost assume that Toronto graduates would be under a special handicap in the service of the federal government. Throughout the External Service as a whole graduates of Toronto have no more than their fair share of appointments. It is, however, a fact, although a fortuitous one, that there have always been close personal connections between the Canadian mission in Washington and this University.

When I first went to Washington, there were serving at the then Legation five officers, with a total staff amounting to a dozen or so. There are today at the Embassy some twenty-two officers and the staff of all grades comes to about eighty. The great expansion has come only since 1941. Indeed, during the war the total number of Canadians serving in some official capacity in Washington must at its peak have amounted to nearly a thousand. There were then large separate offices maintained there by the Department of Munitions and Supply and the Department of National Defence, as well as several small departmental offices charged with special duties and not incorporated in the Embassy. There is still a substantial Canadian Joint Staff Mission, but all the other departmental offices have been closed, except for a few people engaged in winding up business, and their residual functions have been taken over by the Canadian Embassy.

In the Embassy itself there are now incorporated members of the Department of Trade and Commerce, the Department of Finance, and the National Research Council, as well as Military, Naval and Air Attaches from the armed forces. Like other countries, we have found it necessary to develop the practice of sending specialists abroad to look after particular interests.

and maintain contact with the experts of other countries, thus aiding and supplementing the work of the central staff from the Department of External Affairs. I sometimes think that it is the fate of a diplomat in the modern world to have to know not much about anything but a little about everything, from nuclear physics and comparative theology to the breeding habits of the sockeye salmon and Alaska fur seal. We are fortunate in Washington in being able to summon to our aid, when we get too involved in technical questions, better informed persons who can come easily down from Ottawa.

The main reasons for the great increase in the work of Canadian representatives in Washington since 1959 are the greater international stature of Canada, the disheartening complexities of the world situation, and the larger part which governments everywhere are called on to take in matters that many would be pleased to leave to private enterprise if it were feasible.

Another reason has been the establishment of new international bodies. There has, indeed, been such a proliferation of new international agencies since the war that it is hard to avoid getting lost in a dance of the alphabet. Ordinary people can understand, or can be taught to understand, the United Nations, and what its main organs, the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council do, or at least could do if the expectations of 1945 were to be fulfilled. But what of ICAO and UNESCO and WHO and ITO and ITU, to refer to some of the more important?

There are now operating in Washington several such bodies on which all or some of the Canadian representation is provided by members of the Embassy. These include the Far Eastern Commission, charged with the formulation of policies for Japan; the International Emergency Food Council, charged with proposing the allocation in accordance with needs of food stuffs in short supply; UFRRA, now in process of liquidation; the Food and Agriculture Organization, charged with long-term planning to raise standards of nutrition and production throughout the world; the International Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which have just come into active operation; and also other bodies of lesser scope than those which I have named. The task of representing Canada on these bodies and their committees, in which nearly every officer of the Embassy takes some part, is consuming in time, energy and manpower.

These duties of representation on international bodies are special duties arising from the circumstance that Washington has become a great international center. They are added to the normal duties of the Embassy, which are complicated enough in themselves. A Canadian businessman said to me recently that he could understand what the commercial department of the Embassy did, but couldn't see the use of the rest of it. A Toronto friend also remarked to me not long ago that he did not understand why Canada had to have any Embassy in Washington. I doubt that these comments are typical, but it might be of some interest if I were to give you a brief summary of what a diplomatic mission in general, and the Canadian Embassy in Washington in particular, is supposed to do.

Its most time - and paper - consuming responsibility is that of keeping the Canadian Government informed of events and developments which are of concern or interest to it, and particularly of the background and probable future trends. In Washington this duty, of course, is to supplement, not to duplicate, the ample news from the United States appearing in the press.

To give some examples, it is obviously of great interest to the Canadian Government to learn promptly and accurately, and if possible in advance of public pronouncements, about the plans for assisting in reconstruction abroad in these days of dollar stringency throughout the world. That is a matter to which I and several members of the staff are currently devoting a good deal of attention.

To illustrate again, the affairs of Canada and the United States are so interrelated that a great many actions of the Government of the United

States, which to a more remote country might be of little concern, affect us most intimately. The rapid removal last year of nearly all price controls was a case in point, for we are currently buying three-quarters of our imports from the United States. The extent of income tax reductions in the legislation recently adopted by Congress is another, as the Minister of Finance recently pointed out. In the traditional field of diplomacy, it is important in Ottawa to have accurate inside information on the main developments in the relations between the United States and other countries, especially in these days of great power politics.

In keeping one's government informed on matters such as these it is not enough to follow the press and to read official documents. Collectively, the members of the Embassy must have a very wide acquaintance with government officials, politicians, members of other diplomatic missions, particularly those of British Commonwealth countries, the press and the public. They must be able to assess wisely the information and opinions they receive, to check them against other sources, and to forecast with good judgment the likely course of future developments. They cannot isolate themselves in their offices and do their work from studying papers.

This duty of collecting and sifting information useful to the Canadian Government, while it is the most time-consuming task of any diplomatic mission, is not its most important one. Coupled with it is the responsibility for seeing, or attempting to see, that the framers of policy in the country concerned do not take decisions touching Canadian interests except with knowledge of what these interests are. My friend the United States Ambassador in Ottawa shares with me the task of seeing that this is done, just as I share with him the task of advising the Canadian Government of the importance to the United States of acts of the Canadian Government.

This also is a duty which involves a wide range of personal contacts. It merges with the responsibility for conducting negotiations, a very important matter, which is what diplomats are popularly supposed to do when they are not attending social functions. The range of negotiation between Canada and the United States is very wide. It covers many subjects from the trivial to the highly important. We may, for example, one day wish to enlist the support of the Secretary of State for securing the effective participation of Canada in the framing of the German settlement. We may also, on the same day, be discussing some technical points about the allocation of a shortwave radio frequency or the extradition of a criminal or the interpretation of a customs regulation.

The bulk of the business of negotiation is transacted with the Department of State, but it is necessary also to maintain contact with all, or nearly all, the other departments and agencies of government. Because the relations between our countries are in general harmonious, we do not have dramatic arguments and protests, such as are not infrequently reported from certain foreign capitals. I can testify from long experience that Canadian representations are cordially received in the State Department, even if they are not always acted upon, and that an easy atmosphere of informality surrounds our negotiations on both vital and trivial matters.

Another aspect of the work of a Canadian Embassy is to assist in spreading accurate and useful public information about Canada. Nearly every government has greatly expanded its publicity abroad during the last few years. I think it safe to say that none of them is satisfied with the methods developed, or results attained, in building up official information services. It is widely recognized that some such service is desirable, even necessary, but nobody has found the answer to the question of exactly how it can best be done. We have a modest special staff engaged in the dissemination of information in Washington and New York, the main functions of which are to answer inquiries, to assist American writers who wish to write about Canadian affairs, to distribute literature of various sorts, and to follow matters relating to Canada which appear in the press and periodicals.

Sometimes when a Canadian visiting the United States encounters an American with strange beliefs, such as that Canadians are taxed from

London or wear snowshoes in August, he is inclined to blame Canadian representatives in the United States for not having successfully educated all the one hundred and forty million people of that country to know better. Crass ignorance is always deplorable, but you must not expect too much. We know, of course, in Canada a great deal more about the United States than they know about us, but that is because we are a smaller country, much affected by nearly everything important that goes on south of the border, and able to follow the course of events there by reading our own newspapers. We could, nevertheless, if we tried, produce just as grotesque misconceptions about the United States which are cherished by some Canadians. In fact, very little damage is done by the existence of prevailing pockets of ignorance of this sort. It is not dangerous ignorance. While the situation has improved a great deal during the last twenty years, one should not get alarmed or irritated because false or distorted ideas still frequently prevail. There is no way of compelling the people of any country to assimilate facts.

Spreading information abroad about Canada is a function by no means confined wholly to specialists in the Canadian Information Service, which has recently become a part of the Department of External Affairs. It engages part of the time of every officer of the Embassy, and a good deal of the Ambassador's own time. For Ambassadors are supposed to make speeches even when they have no oratorical gifts - speeches in which they must be careful to avoid giving offence to anyone, a condition which sets a high premium on the art of making platitudes sound novel. They must also see members of the press fairly frequently, and be prepared as well, when they meet people, to be asked questions ranging from the size of the Canadian national debt to the dog-licensing provisions at a summer resort.

Finally, another branch of the functions of a diplomatic mission is to watch over the interests of Canadian individuals and companies when they are affected by acts of the Government of the country concerned. The enormous variety of troubles into which Canadians can get themselves all over the world impresses itself on anyone who has seen much of the workings of the Department of External Affairs. I had supposed that we were on the whole a fairly stay-at-home people except for our constant journeyings to the United States; we have, after all, a large Canadian patrimony to move around in. I can assure you that that is not the case. Fortunately for the Embassy in Washington, the fact of propinquity saves us a good deal in this branch of work. Most of the Canadians in trouble south of the border extricate themselves without invoking official aid. The Embassy does an active business, nevertheless, along certain lines, some of which might lead one to the erroneous conclusion that we are a lawless and unregenerate nation. Another side of this work, respectable and active, relates to the issuance and renewal of passports, advising on questions of citizenship and so on.

You may note that I have said nothing about one sort of activity which is that most commonly made the subject of ridicule by those who poke fun at my adopted profession. For a long time a certain Member of Parliament, not unknown in Toronto, could not mention Canadian representatives abroad without introducing references to striped pants, pink teas, late dinner parties and the like. Of course, I own striped pants myself, but I think, that I have less occasion to wear them in Washington than I would if I were a respected elder citizen of Toronto.

Seriously, there is a good deal of social activity and some formality surrounding part of the work of representing one's country abroad. I hope I have said enough about the functions of an Embassy to show that its members have occupations which are not purely social, in order to justify their existence. Since it is the duty of representatives abroad to achieve a wide acquaintance, and since being entertained and entertaining is the simplest and most effective method of doing this, one cannot dismiss social activities as merely frivolous. Often useful work in furthering the interests of one's country can best be achieved outside office hours and around a dinner table. Talk runs more freely when the advancing clock in the office is not drawing attention to the next appointment a few minutes away, or to the pile of papers waiting to be dealt with.

There is also some inevitable formality about the various state occasions in which chiefs of diplomatic missions participate, such as the annual dinner and reception given by the President at the White House and the affairs staged by many Embassies on their national days. I should not like to leave the impression, however, that there are no lighthearted moments of frivolity in the life of Canadian representatives abroad.

I have now described the chief functions of the Canadian Embassy in Washington. Similar functions are performed by any Canadian diplomatic mission, but their relative importance varies from post to post. They can be summarized as, first, the duty of collecting, assessing, and forwarding information of use to the Canadian Government about the policies and activities of the United States Government; secondly, of negotiating on a wide range of matters from the very important to the trivial; thirdly, of seeking to ensure that decisions of the United States Government affecting Canadian interests are taken in knowledge of these interests; fourthly, of assisting in spreading accurate information about Canada in the United States; fifthly, of protecting the interests of Canadians when they are affected by acts of the United States Government; and sixthly, of representing the Government of Canada, formally and informally, on many occasions, official, social and otherwise. In addition, there is the special work of acting for Canada on a considerable number of international bodies which now hold meetings in Washington. None of these functions is the exclusive responsibility of the Embassy and thus its activities are complementary to what is done in other ways both by official and by unofficial agencies.

They add up to a very considerable volume of business. During the first five months of this year, over three thousand official messages between Ottawa and Washington and vice versa were transmitted by the teletype connecting the Department of External Affairs and the Embassy. The number of written communications sent by diplomatic bags was of the same order of magnitude. This covers only a part of the correspondence of the Embassy, since it relates only to communications between it and the Department of External Affairs.

The life of a Canadian representative in Washington is not a leisurly one and the pace is not slow. We cannot look forward to a slackening of the pace, for events are crowding upon us. If one could consider in isolation the relations between Canada and the United States, there would be little cause for concern and much reason for gratification. But in a world so interdependent and at the same time so disjointed as ours is today, that would be to adopt the attitude of an ostrich. The problems of foreign policy are more numerous and more difficult than they were during the war years; for then we had a supreme test by which to judge what should be done, whether or not it would contribute effectively to the defeat of the enemy.

Now, we are moving through a murkier atmosphere. There are few people, except for the devotees of the gospel of Karl Marx and some simple-minded believers in panaceas and fine phrases, who are confident that they could "grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire" and "re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire". The magnificent and appalling achievement of the scientists in releasing atomic energy has intensified the problems of the post-war era. It is typical of our disenchanted age that when atomic energy is mentioned, people instinctively think in terms of atomic bombs, instead of the enormously beneficial uses of this incredible source of power which will in time be developed.

There is a story about the man who said, "This begins to look quite serious" as they started to slip the noose over his head at dawn. "But", he added, "at least it will teach me a good lesson." It did! Though things are certainly looking quite serious, there is time to learn a good lesson in a less drastic way. The world is still a long distance from another war, but it is also a long distance from peace and stability. We in Canada cannot do a great deal to bring them about, but we must do what we can. We have done our best to aid in building up a saner international order by loyal

support for the United Nations and in other ways. Although there have been many disappointments and setbacks, a useful but faltering beginning has been made. Your representatives abroad are an essential part of the equipment necessary for this task, and they are, I believe, conscious of the privilege, honour, and responsibility which have been given to them.

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