

External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

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Speech by Mr. Marcel Cadieux, Deputy Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Sixteenth Annual Conference on Canadian Information Abroad, Montebello, Quebec, November 8, 1962.

Gentlemen,

I am very pleased and honoured to have an opportunity of speaking to you. Particularly as I shall be called on to deal with two subjects that are very close to my heart - information work and the Department of External Affairs. Like Josephine Baker, I have really "deux amours" and they are the two subjects I am here to discuss.

To illustrate this point and to show that my "deux amours" are closely related, may I be forgiven if I give a personal testimony? Such an approach may perhaps demonstrate other points than the one I have in mind - for instance, that I am getting on in years and that I should have done more in both fields. I realize the risks and I plead for your understanding.

At the moment, and temporarily I think, I have no direct responsibility for information work in the Department. But, ever since I joined the Government service 22 years ago, I have been concerned with information as a Foreign Service Officer and I think that this is not without some significance. I shall revert to this point later.

Shortly after joining the service in 1941, and for nearly two years, in Ottawa, I was Secretary of the Psychological Warfare Committee. This involved maintaining relations, on a daily basis, with the Wartime Information Board, the CBC and other information media. Then I moved to London, early in 1944, and served as Liaison Officer for the British Political Warfare Committee and as Observer to the Allied Conference of Ministers of Education, which was the predecessor of UNESCO. In 1945, I was transferred to Brussels, and for two years I remained there as secretary of the Embassy. Among other things, I was the Information Officer. I came back to Ottawa in 1947, and I got the UNESCO Desk. Then I became Personnel Officer; I was responsible in particular for the integration of WIB officials and for working out the establishment of the Department with its information component.

I was one of the first Departmental Inspectors, and went to Mexico, Paris, Rome, Athens, Warsaw, Prague, where I had to look into information operations as well as into relations between the Department and missions in the information field. My next move was to NATO, Paris, where, as senior adviser on political matters, I was the delegation representative on the Information Committee for three years.

On my return to Ottawa I became the supervising officer for the Information Division, a job which I held for six years. Furthermore, for a number of years, I have been a member of the Board of Governors of the National Film Board and a member, since its foundation in 1958, of the Executive Committee of the UNESCO National Commission. In 1960, I was leader of the Canadian delegation to the UNESCO Conference.

As an FSO, I think I have shown that I believe in information work, that I am interested in it. But, what is even more significant and the real point I am anxious to make, is that my case is like that of every other officer in my service; while there may be some differences in the amount of information work we have to do in the course of our career, such work is very much part and parcel of our lives.

Yes, like you I am sure, and very often, I have wondered over the years why information work, being so important for Canada, seems not to have achieved adequate recognition. The opportunities seem to be considerable and yet, as you know, we are forever short of personnel and money to take advantage of them.

A certain number of explanations for this situation have occurred to me. They will, I am sure, as well as better ones, have occurred to you. They may not all be equally important, but I think that they are relevant to our problem and I suggest that they must be borne in mind if we want to understand what has been happening to government information work in the past and what is likely to continue to happen to it in the future.

The first and the most important factor in this field, I think, is the very nature of our political system.

We have parliamentary democracy and, in such a régime, Ministers are called upon to play a very special role in the formulation and presentation of policies. Yet, at the same time, it seems that they are denied most carefully the kind of machine which they would need to publicize such policies, for fear that such a machine could be exploited for personal or partisan purposes. Under our system, Ministers themselves personally, and not a machine, must devise policies and promote support for them. Ministers must, if they want a certain policy to be adopted, sell it first to their colleagues in Cabinet, then to their colleagues in the party, then to Parliament and to the public in general; and they must do this almost single-handed. Under our system, they personally have to perform the key role in obtaining and retaining support for any policy with which they become identified. It is generally believed that, if Ministers play their role well, in our free society the media of information will assist them and that, together, they will keep the public both in Canada and abroad fully in the picture. Furthermore, anyone with experience in the field of information well knows that Parliament is very jealous of its privileges. Policies must not be announced just anywhere and by anyone. I may add that the private news agencies do not enjoy either being scooped by officials. As a result of all this, and, to complicate matters further, officials and government publications must be very careful in their presentations of government policy. You all know here the very strict limitations which must at all times be adhered to.

Our political system, therefore, has some inhibiting effects on the amount of information work which can be undertaken by officials. The situation is further complicated as a result of the philosophy which we Canadians have developed in regard to information work.

Above all, it seems, we do not want a central information machine. We had one during the war, but, as soon as the war was over, it was very quickly dismantled. Apparently, we do not want government to tell us what to think and because of this, we do not want any central government agency to give us the facts which

might be relevant to our thinking. We have insisted that Ministers themselves, through Parliament, should give the public all the relevant material, and we have relied essentially on private information outlets to do the rest.

This reliance of ours on private enterprise is highly significant. We believe that, if a fact is newsworthy, there will be plenty of people to pick it up and even to make money in the process of reporting it. We believe not only that this is the way things are -- it is the way things should be. We have felt that it is not for the Government to presume to tell us what is and what is not significant, and just to make sure we have denied Government the means to do so. In any event there is a feeling that there are too many Civil Servants.

The result of this philosophy is that, even when we realize that the political system and the private outlets are not adequate in some particular information medium, and when we agree that, in the national interest, private operations in that medium should be supplemented and government facilities provided, it has remained a dogma that there must be a healthy competition between government and private facilities. This has been the case successively with radio, films and now TV. What this means, in effect, is that in a given medium, if business is profitable, the participation of government agencies is limited by competition. When operations have to be undertaken in unprofitable fields, naturally enough, government participation is subject to careful scrutiny, and funds are always subject to strict rationing.

In effect, and for good reasons, I am sure, we have not been willing to provide ourselves with a national centralized, powerful, effective "image-producing" agency. If we are not willing to have such an agency for our own domestic requirements, it is unlikely that there will be one for external purposes -- at least, not unless there is a fundamental change in approach and a thorough review of the whole system.

There is a third factor that I think is also relevant. I have in mind our Canadian mentality in regard to intangible and cultural pursuits. In this, we reflect our environment, our pragmatic approach to the problems of developing a new country. I find -- and it seems to me that my experience is not unique in this field -- that, if you talk to Canadians of building something, you talk about figures, or about schedules or requirements, and you can usually get somewhere. But when you deal with intangible and cultural problems you find immediately a different reaction. You are involved in something very different, which is bound to be confusing and difficult.

It is not only that people, in this area, are worried about provincial rights. They are at a loss as to how you account for results on an objective and reassuring measurable basis; and then, as is so often necessary, when relative judgments have to be made, the natural preference is for the familiar as against the unfamiliar, the measurable as against the imponderable. As Canadians, we are suspicious of artists, "long-haired" professors, "egg-headed" officials. They are hardly compatible with the familiar and pleasant image of our clean-cut outdoor, virile, sport-addict character who, we all know, is the typical Canadian.

In the information field, I suspect, we have been placing undue reliance on the random working together of parliamentary democracy and private information outlets, and on the results of our pioneering concentration on material and concrete operations.

Information specialists should, however, and will continue to urge a change; and reports like the forthcoming Glassco Commission Report are likely to be of very great significance in this respect.

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Yet, having said this, I must add that in so far as information abroad is concerned, what is surprising to me is not how little but, given the framework and the surrounding circumstances, how much is being done. When you consider the whole range of government activities having a bearing on the presentation of an image of Canada to people abroad, you have to mention not only the modest departmental operations of External Affairs, Trade and Commerce, Immigration and Agriculture, but also those of the CBC, the Film Board, the Exhibition Commission, the Tourist Bureau, the National Research Council, the National Gallery, the Canada Council, and the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Given our system of government, you have then to add in the personal activities of Ministers, and -- collectively the most important of all -- the multiple, continuing and most effective contributions made by private companies and individuals. Many of the companies I have in mind are represented here today. The individuals I mean range from Dr. Penfield to the painter Riopelle, distinguished Canadians who have a great deal to do with our impact in other countries, even when most of them do their job here in Canada. While we must, of course, be aware of the limitations on information work as far as the Government is concerned, we must not underestimate what we already have accomplished in this field.

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When I agreed to give this talk, I was given to understand that I would deal with the External Affairs aspect of our problem. This I propose to do because I think that I am better qualified to do this than I should be to handle government information operations as a whole. Besides, I think that what we in External Affairs do, and how we do it, may not be without implications as regards government operations as a whole.

While information work cannot be the essential part of any foreign-office operations, I can assure you that it is a very important part of our activities. It can, however, only be developed within the framework of general government financial and other policies. Information work in our Department is therefore fully integrated with our other activities. If you allow me, I shall deal just with our integrated approach to information, and then try to give you some idea of the importance we attach to this work.

To the extent that information activities at any particular post are sufficient to justify the assignment of a full-time specialist, an effort is made to appoint one. We now have such information specialists at Washington, London, New York and Paris. This, I understand, will continue as our missions grow and as information work at certain missions becomes a full-time operation.

The general rule, however, in our service is that information and cultural work is not a matter for a few specialists but it is the responsibility of all our officers at all our missions. This means that, even where we do not have an information specialist at a mission, the officers of the mission are responsible for such information work as is necessary to achieve the purposes of the mission. I realize that in this field there may be personal preferences, and, consequently, there are differences in approach and

emphasis. One head of mission may attach more importance to prestige film showings. Another may prefer to cultivate newspaper editors. This is inevitable. What remains is that information is an essential ingredient of our operations from top to bottom, in Ottawa as well as abroad. No one can be a successful head of mission who is not a first-class public-relations man, able to use information media effectively; and he is unlikely to recommend for promotion any members of his staff who fail to give him the support he needs on this side of his work.

This integrated approach of ours is necessary partly because of the general Civil Service Commission regulations, which provide for promotions as a result of increased responsibilities. On our establishment, we are a small service; we do not have many missions where we can justify the employment of full-time information officers. If we recruited information specialists, their career opportunities would be limited. Furthermore, experience has shown that such information specialists as do join our service may sooner or later wish to become general political officers. They wish to become FSO's and to enjoy the same chances for promotion and postings as their colleagues. Consequently, we have discovered over the years that, except in a few particular assignments, it is often as effective to train FSO's to the requirements of information work as it is to try to turn information specialists into political officers.

I should like to point out, by the way, that our Department has a lot of people who at one time or another have been identified with information work in a professional capacity. I had the curiosity to look into this the other day and discovered that no less than 12 per cent of our officers, 48 of them altogether, had professional newspaper or information experience before joining the Department. Twelve of these men are now, or recently have been, heads of mission.

There is a highly important point to establish here, which will serve to summarize what I have been trying to say about integration in our service. External Affairs' need is not so much for information personnel and material for its own sake, but for the various information means of achieving political ends. The emphasis in our Department is necessarily on the relationship between information and external policy. The ability to connect the two is of the essence. As you may have seen from my own departmental experience, our integrated approach means that we are in and out of specific information work, or dealing with it in general terms, all our lives. Instead of leaving information work to a handful of specialists in Ottawa and at a few missions abroad, we are operating on the assumption that information is the responsibility of every officer in the service, no matter where located, because it is an essential part of diplomatic operations.

Next, I wish to stress the importance of information work in our service. The Information Division and its budget are substantial in terms of our overall operations. Among its total staff of 34 there are a dozen officers, making of it the second largest division in the Department in terms of officer strength and one of the largest in payroll terms. Our annual budget for information publications and activities has run a little over a quarter of a million dollars in recent years. But I hope you will see, from what I have just been saying, that the importance of the Department's information work is much greater than can be judged by the staff and budget of our Information Division, just as by far the larger part of an iceberg lies concealed beneath the surface

of the sea. The total extent and impact of our information work can only be assessed by listing almost all our officers, and taking into account the collective effect of a large part of their day-to-day activities, integrated as these are with information work in so many ways, as I have tried to explain.

Apart from our Department's own resources, we very naturally give a great deal of attention to direct liaison with other departments and agencies concerned with information abroad. We have developed close personal contacts with the officers in charge. While this may not be very impressive on paper, in practice, the results are very substantial. On a day-to-day basis, for instance, we are in close touch with the Directors of the International Service of the CBC, the Exhibition Commission, the National Gallery and the Canada Council. I have already mentioned my membership of the National Film Board and of the Executive Committee of the UNESCO National Commission.

Let me give you one example of what this sort of liaison means in practical terms. While there is no chance that the Department of External Affairs could hope to obtain from Treasury Board the necessary resources to produce a film on the Colombo Plan, the Columbia, the Seaway, we have been successful, through our contacts with the National Film Board, in having films on just these subjects produced to meet the requirements of our information abroad. If you ask how much money the Department of External Affairs is spending on film production, you get a negative answer, and yet there is nothing that gives a more inaccurate idea of the real situation. I could give you other examples. The point is that we are in close touch with other information outlets, and, in planning their operations, they are good enough to take account of our policy and practical requirements.

To get back to my own Department, my next point is that our information operations should be assessed not only quantitatively -- in terms of the resources we are able to allocate to them -- but qualitatively. I am glad to say that we assign to this Division our very best officers. I welcome this opportunity of paying tribute to one of the early Heads of the Division, Dr. Geoffrey Andrew, whose opening address has just shown us how firm a grasp he has of information problems generally. His skill and experience were of immense help to the Division in the formative years just after the war. We are delighted to have him back in Ottawa once again, although in another capacity, because we know we may continue to rely upon his advice in case of need. The present Head of the Division is Mr. Southam, who was such an outstanding representative of our country in Poland. Before him we had Mr. Berlis, one of our most distinguished officers, whom the Government has just appointed as our High Commissioner in Tanganyika. And let me say that over the years those who have headed our Information Division have made their mark in the service. I need only mention such outstanding officers as Mr. Andrew, now our Ambassador to Israel, and Mr. Tremblay, Head of our Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York.

This surely illustrates my point about integration. Our heads of mission are sometimes more effective because of their experience in information work; and, as heads of mission, they are unlikely to underestimate information work if they have been involved in it. This would not happen if information work was left to a few specialists who, in a service like our own, could never represent more than a small proportion of our whole establishment.

There have been criticisms that there is too much turnover in our Information Division personnel. It is true that over the years many officers have been assigned to information work and then, shortly afterwards, transferred to other tasks. The quick rotation of personnel is not limited to the information field. This phenomenon affects all divisions of the Department.

The reasons for these transfers are, first, that, under our present Civil Service system, promotion is linked with increased responsibilities. It is easier very often for an officer to get advancement as a result of posting to a new job involving clearly higher responsibilities than as a result of a demonstration that the duties of his particular job have increased since the last establishment survey. It must be recalled, and this is a second reason for our policy, that ours is and must be a rotational service. Many of our posts abroad are difficult. The proportion of difficult posts is, in fact, increasing. Our officers cannot be left at these posts indefinitely. After a few years they must come out and be replaced. As they come out of these posts, they must be assigned elsewhere, either at some other mission or in the Department. You will also appreciate that certain postings, in tropical countries for instance, cannot be extended. The third factor is that rotation may, in fact, have to be accelerated if, as is the case with us, the Department is expanding. As new posts are opened and additional commitments must be met, we draw on our experienced personnel. But, if you move a third secretary to Yaoundé or Dar-es-Salaam, you may end up with a chain reaction involving staff at headquarters and at half a dozen missions. Again, in respect of these moves, we have little choice.

As you can see, promotions, expansion and rotation combine to explain why our turnover in information, as in other work, is so large. We hope that, in time, we shall be able to settle down and provide more continuity in a number of key positions in the Department. This is a requirement we fully accept; but, so far, try as we may, we have been compelled to subordinate continuity to other more urgent requirements.

I should be the first to admit that I should be delighted if we had more officers on information work, and if we had more money to do information and cultural activities. Let me emphasize that those who are concerned with information work in the Department have not been shy in making representation to Government and to Treasury to obtain more staff and more money. It is not possible for Civil Servants to shout these representations from rooftops, of course, but, because they are not made publicly, it is not to be presumed that they have not been made or that what we have to work with represents all we want. In this connection, may I say how very helpful we have found the representations made to us by this gathering in past years. We are all agreed, I am sure (all of us here, Civil Servants and businessmen alike), in hoping that eventually a higher priority will be given to information work.

However, it must be understood that, as far as Civil Servants are concerned, we are operating within a framework of government policy. We must do the best we can with what the Government is prepared to give us. It will be clear that, having made our case for more, as best we can, we must loyally accept the final government decision, which must balance competing claims against available resources, and do our best to implement it effectively. The ultimate decision as to the allocation of resources is a matter of high policy; and Information Officers, Foreign Service Officers, and Civil Servants generally, may I remind

you, are not the ultimate judges in these matters. In the circumstances, I should like to suggest that information officers in the government service be offered the consideration once extended to the fabled man at the piano. After all, they are doing their best.

I must add that, important as information activities may be in a foreign service, they cannot and must not be its main purposes. A foreign service provides, essentially, advice to the government as to what is happening abroad, as to what developments at home may mean in the context of our relations with other countries. A foreign service is concerned with negotiations with other countries and with the protection of national interests abroad. We must assess very carefully and objectively the extent to which information work really helps achieve these purposes. We must recognize that there are strict limits to the amount of influence that can be achieved on the posture of another government in negotiations as a result of public information activities within the country it controls. There are, as a result, often difficult choices to make between information and cultural and certain other types of representational activities. The point I am making is that, while we consider information work as an essential part of our activities, we cannot operate as a central information office. We operate a diplomatic service and our business is to field successful diplomatic officers. Information work is one of their tools. It is not their main business. I hope, however, that I have shown that they attach importance to it and that they want to use it intelligently and effectively.

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I have outlined the framework within which our information activities are being carried out. I have endeavoured to indicate the main features of our operations in this field. The general impression I wish to convey to you is that, while we are not doing as much as we could do theoretically, given the practical and other limitations, we have recognized the very great importance of information work in the operations of our External Affairs Department. To maximize its effectiveness, we have fully integrated our information with our other work and we are trying to make the best possible use of what is made available to us in this field. We could do more perhaps, but the question here is, can we have more? And that question, as I have suggested and as you well know, is not one for Civil Servants to answer.

It may be that the answer will be made easier as a result of the forthcoming Glasco Report. We, for our part, welcomed the whole question of information work abroad being looked into by a Royal Commission. We certainly look forward to expert suggestions for strengthening and improving the information arm of our service. Above all, Glasco Commission recommendations, constructive as I am sure they will be, are likely to promote better public awareness of the need to explain abroad our attitudes. This would be a factor that would make it easier for all concerned to give information requirements the priority they deserve.

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