



# REFERENCE PAPERS

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 2  
August - 1946.

## THE DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

### Historical background

The growing importance of Canada in world affairs during the forty years following Confederation made it desirable, by the early 1900's, that it should adopt an organized method of conducting its 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.

Sir Joseph's 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". This title contains an indication of its relations with 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. 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 United Kingdom government.

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 the Governor General's secretary, all despatches were henceforth sent to him 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 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 since April 1 of that year he has held the additional portfolio of Secretary of State for External Affairs. The appointment of a separate minister for the Department has been 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 passing of the bill on April 2, 1946, placed the Department in the same position as other government departments, but until a separate minister is appointed the Prime Minister continues to act in that capacity.

#### 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) the 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;

#### Expansion

The Department began with a modest staff consisting of the permanent 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 not 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 Canadian 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. As the United Kingdom government was now without a representative in Canada it appointed a High Commissioner to represent it at Ottawa. And after July 1, 1927, correspondence from Commonwealth or foreign 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 are 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

Prior to 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 a legation was opened 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 and recruitment of personnel. 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 island 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 European 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. This, however, was only a temporary arrangement. Separate missions are now being appointed to the various capitals as conditions warrant.

The Canadian government has agreed to the exchange of ministers with Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey and these countries have already established legations in Ottawa.

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 embassies and certain new missions established after that time were given the rank of embassy from the beginning.

In contrast to 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 the increasing Canadian interests in that area of the United States. A Vice-Consulate has since been opened in Portland, Maine, and 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, Peru, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and United States of America;
- (b) Legations in: Cuba, The Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Luxembourg;
- (c) High Commissioners' Offices in: Australia, Ireland, Newfoundland, New Zealand, South Africa and United Kingdom;
- (d) Consulates-General in: New York, Lisbon and Caracas;
- (e) Vice-Consulate in: Portland, Me.
- (f) Military Mission in: Berlin.

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 consists of the ambassador or minister assisted by counsellors, first, second or third secretaries, as the case may be.

In some cases officers of other departments of the Canadian government -- commercial secretaries, military, naval, air or press attaches -- are attached to the missions. Though responsible to their own departmental head in Ottawa they work under the supervision and direction of the head of 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. In New York, Washington, London, Paris, and Canberra officers of the Canadian Information Service are attached to the mission for this purpose. In other missions it is the task of one of the Secretaries, and in places where there are no diplomatic representatives the trade commissioner or other Canadian government official stationed in the country do this work.

#### Departmental Organization at Ottawa

With the expansion of Canadian representation abroad the work of the Department at Ottawa has increased correspondingly.

Perhaps the most striking indication of the Department's growth is its budget. Departmental estimates have increased from \$17,423.58 in the fiscal year 1909-10 to \$624,041.53 in 1929-30 and to \$4,938,775.50 (with an additional War Appropriation of \$458,228.00) in 1945 - 1946.

Headquarters at Ottawa is traditionally the "East Block" of the Parliament Buildings.

The staff, on the top level, consists of an Under-Secretary with an Associate, and Assistant Under-Secretaries. These are assisted by officers of various grades with the titles, from senior to junior, of Counsellor, First Secretary, Second Secretary and Third Secretary.

The chart at the end of this paper shows the division of responsibilities within the Department.

The Political Divisions, under the direct supervision of the Associate Under-Secretary, divide their responsibilities chiefly along geographical lines. As at present constituted (1946), the First Political Division handles material relating to international organizations, peace treaties and special subjects of a related nature. The Second covers the British Commonwealth of Nations, Europe, Africa and the Near East. The Third is responsible for the handling of problems concerning the United States of America, the Far East and Latin America.

The Diplomatic Division handles all questions of protocol, the issuance of passports and other matters arising from the problems of the travelling public.

The Economic Division deals with such matters as civil aviation, UNRRA, the Food and Agriculture Organization and, in cooperation with the Department of Trade and Commerce and the Department of Finance, with all economic, trade and commercial problems of an international character. Interdepartmental action on economic matters which concern other governments is usually handled by this division.

With the extension of Canada's publicity and cultural-relations problems in foreign countries it was found necessary to establish an Information Division. This Division has a dual function -- to serve the missions abroad and to act as a receiving and distributing centre for information within the Department. It works in close liaison with the Canadian Information Service on whose committees it is represented, with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (International Service) and the National Film Board, and keeps in touch with the press at home. It is responsible for the issuing of departmental press releases.

The work of the Legal Division influences that of all the other divisions, since almost all foreign questions have a legal aspect.

It is the duty of this Division to safeguard the legal side of Canada's relations with other states. Attention must also be paid to the constitutional validity within Canada of all international undertakings. Liaison with the Department of Justice on questions of this nature is in the hands of this Division.

The Treaty Division was formerly a branch of the Legal Division. Its functions include the registration of treaties and international agreements, their publication and their presentation to Parliament. It also assists in the preparation of treaties and helps other authorities in their interpretation and application.

The finances of the Department are handled in the Administration Branch, which also looks after staff appointments, salary, living allowances, the purchase of property and related matters as well as carrying out the regular work of administering Civil Service regulations at home and abroad.

#### Recruitment of Personnel

Those entering the external service of Canada do so on a career basis under the merit system. Only British subjects who have resided in Canada for at least five years are eligible for admission. Basic qualification for the diplomatic service is a University degree, with, preferably, post-graduate study in political economy, political science, history or law. Examinations are held periodically 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--first step in a diplomatic career--consists of essay and precis writing and papers on such subjects as international affairs, international law, economics, constitutional law and modern history. The oral test is designed to disclose personality and knowledge of modern languages.

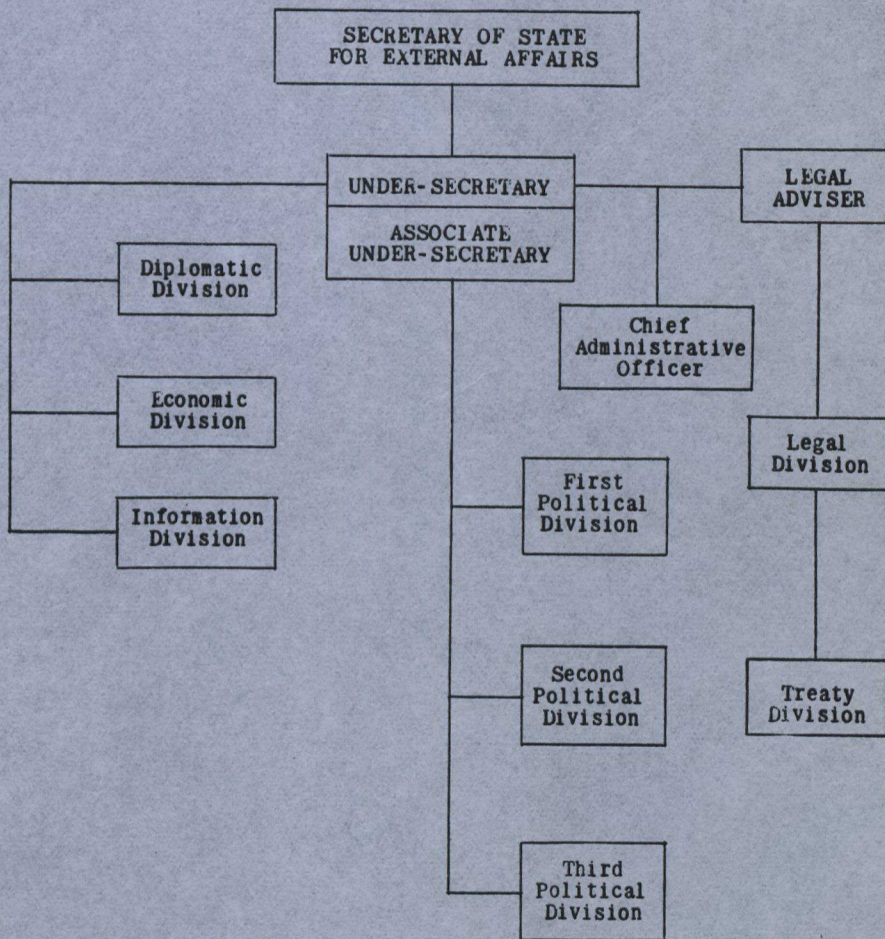
As in other government departments veterans are given preference in all appointments.

The higher posts of High Commissioner, Minister and Ambassador are filled by appointment. They are now divided about equally between "career men" who have come up through the civil service and distinguished citizens appointed directly from private life.

Up to the present time appointments in the service have not, in general, been open to women. During the war a limited number of qualified women were admitted to the Department to do the work of Third Secretary, but though their position as officers is recognized within the Department they have not been granted permanent diplomatic status. Exceptions are the appointment of two women to diplomatic posts abroad, one with consular rank and one with temporary diplomatic rank.

The staff in Ottawa and abroad now (1946) includes about 125 officers of diplomatic rank. In addition there are about 200 clerical personnel in Ottawa and an equal number in the missions abroad. This is about three times the pre-war staff and it is still expanding. As Canada's interests multiply in the international field the Department will continue to grow.

Organization of the Department of External Affairs



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