

CANADA'S FOREIGN RELATIONS

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CANADIANS are perhaps too prone to dismiss with a shrug any reference to the importance of diplomacy. But whether we like it or not, the fact now is that Canada has to fulfil an important function in international affairs. The days when we thought of "foreign policy" in terms of Whitehall are a thing of the past. The brief era of having our cake and eating it too, when, if things went awry, the blame could be placed on London, has slipped away, without many of us realizing its passage. No longer can Canadians go out into the international rain with the comforting thought that if they get wet, they can promptly scramble back under the Imperial umbrella.

All that has passed. Decisions on matters of foreign policy, as well as on matters pertaining to our relations with the rest of the Commonwealth, must now be taken at Ottawa. For this reason it becomes increasingly important that public attention should be focused upon the East Block, wherein is housed Canada's "Foreign Office," the Department of External Affairs.

The truth of the matter is that the Department of External Affairs, in the face of an apathetic public opinion and a seriously prescribed budget, has discharged the most delicate and arduous duties with the most astonishing skill and foresight. Lacking the driving incentives of public confidence or public criticism, the permanent officials of the Department have been burdened with the duty not only of administering foreign policy but of creating it. In an endeavour to meet and solve problems of external relations, problems which by their very nature are a generation ahead of Canadian public opinion, it is inevitable that personal attitudes should play their part.

One man may well be a confirmed Canadian nationalist, another an imperialist in his outlook; yet another may lean over backwards in an attempt to bring Canada into line with the present move in the direction of continental solidarity. We do not need a Mr. Justice Frankfurter or a Professor Laski to tell us that mental attitudes are inevitably conditioned by upbringing and environment. Under normal circumstances the journalist, the politician, the writer, is enabled to check

refreshing breeze of public opinion itself. Unless he is particularly stalwart, disaster will very quickly stare in the face that politician, that journalist, who dares to flaunt the masses, and who continues to plough his own narrow furrow despite very obvious ill-will and opposition.

Sometimes, indeed, even a vigorous and vocal public opinion will not deter one whose views have become so settled and crystallized that not even common sense will make him change. Instances of this sort of stubbornness have already come to light in the United Kingdom and the United States. Nor can such stubbornness be attributed alone to political leaders such as the makers of the *Pact of Munich*. The British Foreign Office, and its United States counterpart, the State Department at Washington, contain ample evidence of mental attitudes and unbending rigidity of mind among permanent officials. Canada, thus far, has been peculiarly and happily free from any such tendencies. Our embryo "Foreign Office" is still too young to suffer from mental atrophy.

In Britain, the traditional anonymity of the Civil Service has been torn aside by the war, to reveal some very ugly and disagreeable situations. Mr. Anthony Eden has found it necessary, in the face of a newly awakened public consciousness, to promise sweeping reforms and radical democratization of the British diplomatic service. The hierarchy of the Foreign Office, the "appeasers" and their ilk, have gone into sudden obscurity. The realists, but a few short months ago regarded as true radicals, have been called upon to fill the breach. Those whose mental rigidity made it impossible for them to see the light, to face the facts of a new world order, have gone into sudden official eclipse. Recruits for the British diplomatic service will, henceforth, come from more democratic sources. Snobbery and frills are to be a thing of the past. Women are to be admitted to the service on terms of equality with men. Salaries and allowances are to be raised to a point where the absence of personal wealth or private means will no longer present an almost insuperable barrier to a successful diplomatic career.

A remarkably similar trend is noticeable in the United States. The people of the United States have never had any serious regard for the principle of anonymity in relation to the public service. It is therefore not surprising to find the so-called intellectual publications in the United States going through the personnel of the State Department with a fine tooth comb,

Anti-Semite, almost *ad nauseam*. Such personal public identification of permanent diplomatic officials is still exceedingly rare in England, and except for the deplorable attack upon Loring Christie, late Canadian Minister to Washington, entirely unknown in Canada. Its cruelty and unfairness lie in the inability of the public servant singled out for criticism to speak in his own defence.

Most persistent in its critical analysis of State Department personalities has been the *New Republic*. After indulging in much pointed criticism of individuals, the *New Republic* goes on to suggest an explanation as to "why so many important Government officials take attitudes which seem at variance with American principles." The explanation, an almost slavish adaptation of the British explanation for the same British problem, is interesting if for no other reason than its utter inapplicability to the Canadian situation.

"The State Department's permanent staff"—the *New Republic* declares—"has for generations been selected on a basis of wealth and social position. In recent years efforts have been made to remedy this, but they have been only partially successful. Even when wealth is not still required, social prestige is a highly desirable qualification. The little circle of men with money, or family, or both, in a few big Eastern cities is bad training-ground for true democrats or men of outstanding abilities." After thus explaining away the undemocratic atmosphere which it believes pervades the State Department, the *New Republic* feels that as targets for a parting shot the seniority system and departmental secrecy cannot be ignored. "In the State Department there is no limit to the number of times you can be proved wrong without losing your power to go on making mistakes of the same sort." This last passage, alas, appears to be of universal application in the public services of the democracies. Under the régime of the dictators, public servants do not often have the opportunity of making the same mistake, or indeed any mistake, more than once!

It has just been said that the *New Republic's* explanation for the shortcomings of the "career" diplomat are not applicable to Canada. Why is this so? In the first place, outside of French Canada, this country is too young to have developed its own aristocracy of wealth or of family. In French-speaking Canada, while family may have gained a place in the social order, wealth has been marked by its almost complete absence. The result

there could not have been found a sufficient number of intelligent men of wealth and family to meet requirements. Rather, the recruits for the Canadian External Affairs Service have, for the most part, come from the most varied strata of Canadian society. Wealth and position, while not a hindrance, are certainly no particular help to the aspirant for a career as a Canadian diplomatist. The young men of our External Affairs Service represent a very intelligent, but ordinary cross-section of the type of Canadian youth which enters an academic or teaching career, or the field of journalism. External Affairs people sometimes get rather "fed up" with the frequent press and parliamentary references to "the cream of young Canadian manhood" and other equally empty phrases. The only criticism, if criticism it is, that can be fairly levelled at the personnel of the Canadian External Affairs Service, is the lack of experience of that personnel in any other field or profession. For many, to be appointed as Third Secretary is a first job, and the person appointed has little opportunity to compare and contrast his lot and his work with that of his fellow citizens in other fields of endeavour. That the Government recognizes this fact is amply evident from the frequency with which appointments to top-ranking posts are made from without the Service itself. The background of the academic, however excellent it may be, is scarcely the sort of training to develop a capacity for making decisions and for acting swiftly and unhesitatingly in time of crisis. There are exceptions, of course. The exception, however, does not make the rule.

But if the only flaw to be found in Canada's Foreign Office is the academic tradition of certain of its personnel, why bother to discuss the matter at all? The answer is simple, and it is strikingly important. It is just this: in the absence of an awakened sense of public responsibility in Canadian foreign relations, the Departmental personnel at Ottawa will continue to make, as well as to administer, the policies of this country in our relations with our neighbors. So far, Canada has been fortunate in having as members of our "Foreign Office" staff men whose way of life and whose mental outlook has been in tune with Canadian thought and Canadian opinion. Devoid of enlightened press criticism, groping in the dark without the guiding influence of a Parliament alive to the country's international responsibilities, without even a Minister of External

which, thus far, have proved to be remarkably palatable to the people of Canada. The Prime Minister, in his capacity as Secretary of State for External Affairs, has been only too glad to rely upon his experts, especially at a time when the exigencies first of the depression, and now of war itself, place upon his shoulders an exceptionally heavy strain.

But Canada is rapidly reaching the stage where her foreign relations cannot safely be left almost entirely in the hands of a few senior members of the public service, no matter how competent they may be. Inevitably, as time goes on, the very men who have stepped forward to fill the present gap will themselves become the victims of their own circumstances. Mental attitudes, a liking for this policy or a dislike for that, must in the very nature of things creep in to sway the views of the permanent civil servant. When public opinion, and a sense of national responsibility in external affairs, do become prominent factors in our country's life, it will be but natural to expect opposition and a certain rigidity of mind on the part of those who now so expertly guide our foreign relations. It is unfair to these men to allow them to be placed in so unfortunate a position. No public servant, least of all a "career" man, should be called upon actually to make policy. His function is solely to advise and to report, to tender expert opinion, to be accepted or rejected by the statesmen concerned in the light of national policies and international trends. At the moment we have neither the policies nor the statesmen in the position of responsibility to formulate or alter them.

Instead, we have an apathetic public which thinks and acts in terms of 1914 so far as foreign affairs are concerned. The man or woman who is willing to accept as a *fait accompli* the decisions of Whitehall is blissfully ignorant that times have changed, and that the gray old East Block at Ottawa is the place where things are happening and where decisions are taken in the field of foreign relations. That way of thinking, that failure to face the responsibilities of nationhood, will have to go. No country that calls itself a nation, and which is a nation in every domestic and imperial sense of the term, can afford indefinitely to remain colonial in its thinking on foreign affairs. Yet that, in effect, is just what we Canadians are doing to-day. Unless we ourselves, through our press, our Parliament and our radio networks gradually bring about an awakening of a sense of

How can we best prepare ourselves for effective, "streamlined" action in the diplomatic field? First and foremost, by the means above mentioned, viz., discussion of our foreign relations in the press and over the air, with a thorough realization of the sort of machinery we at present possess to cope with diplomatic problems. Secondly, in order of treatment but not of importance, Canada must have a Cabinet Minister whose sole portfolio will be that of Secretary of State for External Affairs. The tasks and burdens of the Prime Ministership are far too arduous to permit any one man to discharge those duties and at the same time to bear the responsibility of Foreign Minister. The historic accident which, for the time being, has merged two important portfolios in one, should not, cannot, stand as an indefinite barrier to the growth of a vital and realistic Canadian foreign policy. Successive Prime Ministers would be among the first to emphasize the burden which the carrying of the two important offices entails. When work and the pressure of events have outstripped the mechanism, it is time to give consideration to overhauling the mechanism itself. That time has now arrived.

Thirdly, a House Committee on Foreign Affairs should be established, to act as a public check upon the judgment of the Minister of External Affairs and his advisers, the permanent staff of the Department over which he presides. Debates on external affairs are practically unknown in Canada. In other countries, parliamentary discussion of foreign policy usually packs the galleries and makes headlines in the press. Unless and until the individual members of parliament come to a full realisation of our international responsibilities, debates on foreign affairs will continue to be unheard of at Ottawa.

What is needed in Canada is a democratization of the Department of External Affairs, not in the sense of personnel, but rather in the sense of bringing up to date the country's diplomatic machinery. As it now stands, it is creaking and ponderous, with a comparatively youthful personnel struggling in a tangle of restrictive red tape and traditional conservatism. That the present machinery operates as well as it does, is probably due to the competence and sound common sense of the Department of External Affairs' own personnel. But that personnel will change, its members will age in the service, or look to more attractive fields of endeavour. Then the mechanical defects

methods followed in the British and American Services, in such matters as rank, status, promotions and salaries. But in trying to build up a Service along the lines followed by the British and the Americans, the Government apparently overlooked the fact that so large a proportion of the personnel of those services were men of private means. Salaries and allowances in the Canadian Service, are, to a very large degree, based on the salaries and allowances which the British and Americans granted to their diplomatists of twenty or more years ago. The result has been that Canada has developed a diplomatic service notable for its impoverishment rather than for anything else. Canada's prestige abroad has not been enhanced as a consequence. At a time when we are entering upon a new phase in our external relations, and establishing diplomatic missions in the socially conscious countries of South America, it would perhaps not be unwise to examine existing salary and allowance levels with a view to upward revision, if it be found warranted. Here again, public apathy and lack of appreciation of the seriousness of our international responsibilities is to blame. A Government will not willingly spend money upon something in which there is little general interest, something which is in many quarters regarded as a costly luxury rather than a necessity. The budget of the Department of External Affairs should be expanded at least to the point where members of the service will not be forced to live in a niggardly manner, thereby reflecting adversely upon the country which they are sent to represent.

Perhaps the war will serve to arouse Canadians to a sense of the importance of these matters. But we are still prone to rely upon Britain to make our vital decisions for us, and to forget that vital decisions are, of necessity, made in the East Block at Ottawa. If Canadians want a foreign policy that truly reflects Canadian opinion, let us just imagine for a moment what our position would be if the worst came to the worst, and Britain went down in the present struggle.

That may never come to pass. There is no reason to expect that it will. But if it did, where would Canada stand in the field of foreign relations? Whence would come the checks and balances of public opinion, of the press, parliament and the radio, which would guide the members of the public service in the new orientations of external relations that would be