

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

ANNUAL REPORT FOR YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1947

INTRODUCTION

THIS report is a record of the actions of the Government and the Department in the field of external affairs during the period of 1st April, 1946, to 31st March, 1947. It is not a survey or commentary upon the international situation.

It deals summarily with any topic which has already been the subject of special report to Parliament, but opportunity has been taken to record in more detail those topics which have not otherwise been brought to Parliament's attention. The space given to a particular section is therefore not necessarily an index to its relative importance. Since this is the first annual report of the Department it includes certain background information to the activities of the past year.

The Department of External Affairs has its origin in the Imperial Affairs Section of the Prime Minister's Department, established in 1926. At that time the Department of External Affairs, so called, was concerned only with the administration of New Zealand's island territories. The volume of international affairs work was continually expanding then and since with the increasing recognition of New Zealand's international status; with the responsibilities involved in New Zealand's membership of the League of Nations; with New Zealand's election to the Council of the League in 1936; with the expansion of British Commonwealth consultation on foreign affairs in the period before the outbreak of war; and with the increase of New Zealand's foreign relations as a result of the Second World War. In 1943 the existing Department of External Affairs was given a new name—Department of Island Territories—which more accurately described its functions, and a new Department was set up under the provisions of the External Affairs Act, 1943, to co-ordinate and conduct New Zealand's relations with the other members of the Commonwealth, with foreign Governments, and with international organizations.

As the report indicates, New Zealand's interest and responsibilities in international affairs have continued to increase with the even greater development in the last few years of intra-Commonwealth consultation, the diplomatic activity resulting from the defeat of the Axis and the need to settle the framework of peace, and the extension of international co-operation in the political, economic, and welfare fields, as reflected, especially, in the establishment of the United Nations, its subsidiary organs, and specialized agencies.

The report deals essentially with the Department of External Affairs. It is, however, not possible to make a clear separation between the Prime Minister's Department and the Department of External Affairs. The Prime Minister is also Minister of External Affairs, and his two Departments are run as a unit. The Secretary of External Affairs is also the Permanent Head of the Prime Minister's Department, while the Assistant Secretary of External Affairs is also Secretary to the Cabinet and to the Chiefs of Staff Committee. The staff of the two Departments is held in common, and, though some officers are engaged on work peculiar to one Department, the work of the majority involves both. The same staff also provided the Secretariat of the War Cabinet during its existence. In the internal application of external policy close association with other Departments is necessary, in questions involving strategic and military planning co-operation with the Service Departments is obviously fundamental, as is co-operation with other Departments in such matters as international economic and commercial policy.

To ensure co-ordination in New Zealand's outside relations the Ministry of External Affairs is used as the channel of communication between the New Zealand Government and overseas Governments or organizations and between the Government and its Diplomatic Ministers, High Commissioners, and Consuls overseas. The Department is thus a clearing-house and co-ordinating centre for a wide range of material, which in certain cases is passed on for detailed action to the appropriate Departments. In the case of such technical bodies as UNESCO, FAO, and the World Health Organization, in their formative stages when the problems raised were mainly in the field of international organization and procedure and higher policy, it has been necessary for the Department to take a large measure of responsibility.