

Religion and Politics in Foreign Policy: Canadian Government Relations with the Vatican

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Historically, religious questions have been a thorny issue in Canadian politics. In a country lacking an established church the nature of the relationship between church and state has proved to be a potentially explosive issue. Non-Catholic authorities have been quick to condemn any government action that was seen as granting concessions or providing official recognition to the Catholic Church. Governments, while wary of arousing divisive religious issues, have pondered how they might use the church to their own advantage. In that context the kind of relationship forged between the Canadian government and the Vatican was a very delicate question. Politicians and bureaucrats balanced the advantages that might be gained from developing relations with an institution that held the loyalty of a large percentage of the Canadian people, particularly in Quebec, with the political problems that would result should anti-Catholic feeling among Canadian Protestants be aroused. From the late nineteen-twenties until the early fifties the nature of that relationship was given sporadic attention.

In 1899 a permanent apostolic delegation was established in Ottawa. The delegate's position was strictly ecclesiastical and carried no diplomatic status; however, the government accorded him a degree of precedence in practice to which he was technically not entitled and contact with the Canadian government was not precluded.¹ In fact, in 1923 Prime Minister

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¹ PAC, Sir Joseph Pope Papers, Vol. 10, No. 6J. Pope to C.J. Jones, 30 Dec. 1899. On earlier missions from Rome see Roberto Perin, "Troppi Ardenti Sacerdoti: the Conroy Mission Revisited," *Canadian Historical Review*, LXI (Sept. 1980), pp. 283-304; H.B. Neatby, *Laurier and a Liberal Quebec: A Stuck in Political Management* (Toronto, 1973), pp. 82-91.

Mackenzie King wrote to the pope expressing his appreciation of the work of the current delegate, Mgr. Pietro di Maria, with whom he discussed “des questions qui intéressent à la fois l’Église et l’Etat.” Going further, King asserted that Canada was a country in which various religions coexisted in a state of moderation and tolerance and that this happy state was in large measure attributable “aux délégués apostoliques qui ont représenté le Saint-Siège au Canada, et qui, dans l’accomplissement de leurs importants devoirs, ont invariablement eu recours au large esprit de la conciliation chrétienne.” This tribute drew a warm response from Pius XI.²

Despite his paean to Canadian religious toleration, King was aware that too close an identification with the Catholic Church could harm him politically. For example, after attending a dinner at the apostolic delegation in honour of the Governor General in January 1925, he noted in his diary that his presence might “possibly occasion some comment in ‘orange’ quarters but will take chances. The apostolic delegate is too fine a character not to afford him this very little pleasure.”³

The prime minister was not, however, so impressed with di Maria’s successor, Mgr. Andrea Cassullo. He found him a very different, indeed unattractive, type. At their first meeting, on 21 July 1927, Cassullo raised the issue of precedence, mentioning that his attendance at a government dinner depended upon where he would sit. His concern, he asserted, was not for himself but for the pope.⁴ A few days later the wife of the Governor General, Lady Willingdon, expressed the view that the apostolic delegate, as representative of the church, should be granted a greater degree of precedence. King patiently explained that the church was not officially recognized in Canada and that the delegate was not accredited to the state but sent “only to his own bishops, to keep order among them.” Any precedence he had was by courtesy only. King had this situation explained in writing for the benefit of Cassullo – “a stupid sort of man,” he fumed – as the delegate wished to report to Rome. The prime minister was anxious “at all costs to avoid a question of religion arising.”⁵

As the apostolic delegate had no diplomatic standing he could not be used as an official channel of communication with Rome. During the Conservative regime of R.B. Bennett, who succeeded King in 1930, contacts with the Vatican were carried out by indirect means. It would seem that Bennett and his secretary of state, C.H. Cahan, were working at cross-

² PAC, William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers, Series JI, Vol. 92, pp. 78221-2, King to Pius XI, n.d., pp. 78227-8, Pius XI to King, 15 Aug. 1923.

³ *Ibid.*, Series J13, Diary (hereafter cited as King Diary), 22 Jan. 1925.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 21 July 1927.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 28 July 1927.

purposes in their concern with the role of the Catholic Church in Canada. Each sought to influence church appointments in Canada for reasons of his own.

Cahan, though a Presbyterian, had forged close contacts with the Catholic clergy both in his native Nova Scotia and later in Quebec. He had come to the conclusion that domestic peace in Canada was largely dependent upon the happiness of the French Canadian people and clergy. Unfortunately, for reasons unknown to him, he now found them in June 1931 “disposed to be anxious and sorrowful” and felt strongly that everything possible should be done to alleviate their discontent. Finding Bennett unwilling to intervene, Cahan wrote on his own responsibility to the British Chargé d’affaires to the Holy See, George Ogilvie-Forbes, requesting him to raise the matter delicately at the Vatican, an initiative approved by Archbishop Gauthier of Montreal.⁶

Ogilvie-Forbes informed Cahan that he had been watching this question carefully and had received representations from French Canadians living in Rome. Since he had standing orders not to intervene in internal Canadian questions, unless requested by the Canadian government, he had been able to offer nothing more than a sympathetic ear. He explained that there were also elements active in Rome who opposed the French Canadians whenever any important appointment or action was to occur. “I can nevertheless assure you from personal knowledge,” he wrote,

that the Pope is aware of the difficult and delicate situation in which French Canadians are placed in religious matters.. .

Your letter has given me an opportunity for raising the subject in a discreet manner, which I have done with the Cardinal Secretary of State in the strictest confidence. Cardinal Pacelli was interested and appreciative and I know the matter will come to the notice of the Pope. I may also have an opportunity of speaking to the Pope about it in the near future.⁷

In September 1931 Ogilvie-Forbes told Cahan that “the subject of your last letter has reached the proper and highest quarters.”⁸

Bennett’s concerns reflected the rivalry of Irish and French Canadian Catholics for ecclesiastical preferment, promoting the cause of the former. In April 1932 he sent a personal letter to Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, cautiously requesting that it not be placed on Foreign Office files; the letter was personally delivered by the Archbishop of Winnipeg, A.A.

⁶ PAC, C. H. Cahan Papers, Vol. 1, Cahan to Ogilvie-Forbes, 22 June 1931; Cahan to Gauthier, 22 June 1931; Gauthier to Cahan, 23 June 1931

⁷ *Ibid.*, Ogilvie-Forbes to Cahan, 10 July 1931.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Ogilvie-Forbes to Cahan, 29 Sept. 1931.

Sinnott. Bennett pointed out that the tendency in Canada had been to treat Roman Catholic and French Canadian as synonymous terms, a state of affairs he decried. He also decried the tendency toward separation between the French Canadians and the rest of the Canadian population, which was not conducive to unity or harmony. "In these days of suspicion and distrust," he stressed, "the Roman Catholic Church exercises an ever-increasing influence for the preservation of law and order and regard for constituted authority." It was never more important that the head of the hierarchy exercise his influence "for the promotion of a united Canada in the largest and truest sense of the term." For that reason Bennett felt that when a Canadian cardinal was appointed to replace the late Cardinal Rouleau of Quebec, he should be English-speaking. He urged the merits of two candidates, Sinnott himself and Bishop John McNally of Hamilton, who was highly thought of in Rome. The prime minister asked Simon to have the British chargé at the Vatican, in the most confidential manner possible, suggest this course of action to the appropriate authorities.⁹

On the same day Bennett appealed to Cardinal Sbarretti, Secretary of the Holy Office and a former apostolic delegate to Canada, to use his influence in securing the desired appointment. Bennett sought the unification of Canadians, a process in which the Catholic Church could well be a potent factor. It could not fulfill that role, however, as long as its influence was "weakened and circumscribed" by its identification as a French church. The church's influence would be greatly increased if it had as its head someone who could command the confidence of the entire country which Bennett clearly felt a French Canadian could not do.¹⁰

Simon replied some two months later, after contacting the chargé at the Vatican. He noted that Pius XI, more than his recent predecessors, reserved consideration of such appointments to himself and was not amenable to advice, even from cardinals. However, the chargé had reported that English-Canadian Catholics were more influential at the Vatican than their Francophone compatriots and, indeed, that Bishop McNally of Hamilton was very close to the pope, which caused some concern among French Canadian churchmen in regard to ecclesiastical advancement. The pope was apparently aware of this and, he thought, might well appoint a French Canadian

⁹ PAC, R. B. Bennett Papers, microfilm reel M-1307, pp. 381279-81, Bennett to Sir John Simon, 23 April 1932; cf. R. Huel, "The Irish French Conflict in Catholic Episcopal Nominations: The Western Sees and the Struggle for Domination within the Church," *The Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Study Sessions* (1975), pp. 51-70.

¹⁰ Bennett Papers, reel M-1307, pp. 381303-9, Bennett to Cardinal Sbarretti, 23 April 1932.

cardinal to salve their grievances.¹¹ This was precisely the sort of action that Cahan had advocated the previous year. The British mission to the Vatican must have wondered at the contradictory requests being received from Ottawa. In any event, the prime minister's campaign failed as Archbishop Villeneuve of Quebec was named to the College of Cardinals in March 1933.

Bennett suffered a similar setback in 1934 when he attempted to influence the appointment of a successor to Archbishop Neil McNeil of Toronto, again approaching Sir John Simon for assistance. He described the agitation among Ontario Catholics over the amount of government support for separate schools, an issue which had hurt the Conservative provincial government. He felt that the right Archbishop of Toronto could exert great influence throughout Ontario while avoiding a religious war. His favoured candidate was, once again, McNally of Hamilton. "I have no personal ends to serve in this matter," he claimed, "but I am particularly anxious that the Province of Ontario should not be divided on religious issues, and I believe, from personal observation, that Bishop McNally is the best available Prelate for Toronto." Simon had the British Minister to the Vatican raise Bennett's request with Cardinal Sbarretti.¹² This campaign also proved fruitless, however, as Archbishop McGuigan of Regina was named to the vacant see shortly thereafter.

While the Vatican rejected Bennett's advice on church appointments, it did not hesitate to seek diplomatic status for the apostolic delegate. Problems of precedence occurred at a state dinner following the opening of Parliament in January 1934. Cardinal Villeneuve had been ranked not only behind the apostolic delegate but also behind Archbishop Forbes of Ottawa, who had seniority as an archbishop.¹³ Villeneuve, who considered himself as head of the church in Canada, refused to attend. The incident received some press coverage, particularly in Quebec where it was regarded as an affront to the cardinal. Cahan, who was the responsible minister, suffered a few sleepless nights and, as he told an understanding Mackenzie King, even offered to resign over the incident. Fortunately for Cahan, King promised to see that his Liberal followers did not exploit the issue. The party would follow the practice of Laurier who "never would allow a religious question to get to the fore if he at all could prevent it."¹⁴

Once the public fuss had died down, however, Cahan wrote to Cassullo

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 381282-4, Simon to Bennett, 10 June 1932. There is no reply from Sbarretti in the Bennett Papers.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 381298-300, Bennett to Simon, 11 Oct. 1934; pp. 381310-1, Simon to Bennett, 23 Oct. 1934.

¹³ PAC, Department of External Affairs Records, RG 25, Vol. 812, file 627, C.H. Cahan to Major A.R. Thompson, 18 Jan. 1934.

¹⁴ King Diary, 31 Jan. 1934.

describing the Canadian order of precedence and suggesting that the views of the Vatican be elicited before any changes were made. As there was no state church in Canada, bishops and archbishops were ranked according to their seniority, regardless of denomination, and there was no provision made for the rank of cardinal, which was regarded as equivalent to that of a privy councillor of a foreign sovereign. The apostolic delegate, lacking diplomatic status, had been accorded precedence as representative of the pope. If that courtesy were withdrawn, he would rank after all other archbishops, Catholic or otherwise.¹⁵

After consulting with the Vatican, Cassullo informed Cahan that the Holy See desired Cardinal Villeneuve to be granted precedence on the basis of his position as a Prince of the Pontifical Court. Unfortunately that was not possible. The table of precedence applied only to subjects of the King and Villeneuve's position as prince of a foreign court did not fall within its purview. He could, if the Holy See wished, however, be granted precedence as Archbishop of Quebec over all other Catholic prelates.¹⁶

The whole question, as Cahan noted, was a delicate one and in July 1934 he discussed it personally with the delegate. Cassullo stated, on behalf of the Holy See, that the problem could be satisfactorily resolved if he were received as Papal Nuncio. As a diplomat he would have access to the prime minister and the government and would, in the Vatican's opinion, be in a better position "to solve existing difficulties and promote a better understanding," though Canada would be under no obligation to send a minister to the Vatican.¹⁷

Although Bennett promised to take the matter under consideration, no further progress was evident until May 1935 when Cassullo presented in a more formal manner a statement of the Vatican's position. The Holy See, he noted, was most willing to establish diplomatic relations with Canada "since they would contribute to maintain peace [*sic*] and to promote the spiritual and moral welfare of the country." No reciprocal action by Canada was presupposed, although it would be heartily welcomed. The basis for the appointment would be not merely the temporal sovereignty of the pope over Vatican City, but also his spiritual sovereignty in virtue of his apostolic mission to all nations; on those grounds precedence was claimed for his representative, whose rank would be that of nuncio, as the mandatory "of a spiritual power essentially different from, nay superior to, temporal Sovereignities." The nuncio's relationship with the Canadian hierarchy would

¹⁵ RG 25, Vol. 812, file 627, Cahan to Cassullo, 17 March 1934.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Cassullo to Cahan, 15 June 1934; Cahan to Cassullo, 16 July 1934.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Confidential Memorandum, 21 July 1934.

be unaffected.¹⁸ At this juncture the unavoidable 1935 federal election was rapidly approaching, the injection of a religious issue into the campaign was out of the question for a depression-ridden government struggling to retain office.¹⁹

Following the Conservative defeat in October, Cahan, at the delegate's request, forwarded copies of their correspondence to incoming Prime Minister Mackenzie King. Cassullo, Cahan reported, had told him that the pope was even willing to waive the claim of a nuncio to be dean of the diplomatic corps, and had shown him a letter from Rome which hinted at such a compromise.²⁰ According to his diary, King displayed his usual caution, telling Cassullo on Christmas Eve that in light of the international situation, particularly the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, it "would be most unwise to add to a political question a religious one. That I thought we should let the matter stand till after Europe was quieted down and no question of our relations with Italy be brought into it. I said I felt sure the Holy See would see the wisdom of this."²¹ Cassullo, King informed his under-secretary of state for External Affairs, O.D. Skelton, appeared in agreement. The prime minister told Skelton that it was one of those questions "which will ultimately settle itself more effectively by being dealt with later, in the light of a possible change in world conditions and relations."²²

However, King appeared less hopeful in dealing with the matter in August 1936 at the time of Cassullo's departure from his post. Although the question had been carefully considered by the government, it had concluded that public opinion would not be sufficiently supportive. What King now called a radical change "would not make for that feeling of unity in Canada which is of prime necessity in view of our many difficult domestic and external problems."²³ In saying his personal farewells to Cassullo King added that, as a nuncio had not been received in England, it would raise difficult questions should Canada take the step first. "'The door was not shut' for all time," he told Cassullo, and "that seemed to satisfy him."²⁴

The issue was next raised in 1937 by Mgr. Mozzoni, in temporary charge of the apostolic delegation, with both Minister of Justice Ernest

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Cassullo to Cahan, 25 May 1935.

¹⁹ Bennett Papers, microfilm reel M-1338, p. 417552, Bennett to Cahan, 9 July 1935.

²⁰ RG 25, Vol. 812, file 627, Cahan to King, 16 Oct. 1935.

²¹ King Diary, 24 Dec. 1935.

²² RG 25, Vol. 812, file 627, King to Skelton, 9 Jan. 1936.

²³ *Ibid.*, King to Cassullo, 4 Aug. 1936.

²⁴ King Diary, 5 Aug. 1936.

Lapointe, King's Quebec lieutenant, and the prime minister.²⁵ Some of his arguments were peculiar, if not presumptuous. A nunciature, he urged, would greatly contribute to the unity and social harmony of Canada; he denied that the Catholic Church was seeking any special privileges and asserted that Protestant churches would have no legitimate reason to see any partiality of treatment. He also claimed that a study undertaken by the delegation revealed no serious objection to such a step. The Catholic Church, he stressed, was the strongest and most important church in Canada and directed "nearly exclusively" the fate of Quebec and of the French Canadian and Acadian people. The church would be more than happy to use its position to foster racial harmony in Canada. Meanwhile, Canada would enhance its position abroad by establishing diplomatic relations with the Holy See, while being under no obligation to send a minister there, although Mozzoni was clearly advocating that course. He also unequivocally claimed the right of a nuncio to be dean of the diplomatic corps.

Upon reading this blunt communication King dismissed the prospect of receiving a nuncio out-of-hand. He deemed it "a very crude statement [which] would provoke endless discussion – the real thing is to keep issues from arising."²⁶ Skelton read it with interest but was likewise unimpressed with the argument that a nunciature would forward the cause of unity. He felt that "our former view still holds and is accentuated by the growth of strain and disintegration."²⁷

The task of preparing a reply was given to Loring Christie. Skelton's second-in-command. Christie felt it was important in replying to state precisely that the apostolic delegation functioned as a contact between the Canadian episcopate and the Vatican and that no reason was seen for giving it a diplomatic role. This would protect the government in the event the correspondence was leaked.²⁸ His draft reply was discussed by the Cabinet on 19 October, eliciting a considerable difference of opinion. Some Quebec ministers felt that the government, by giving orders to a nuncio, would be able to dictate to French Canadian Catholics in such areas as attitudes towards industrial disputes. King was clearly unimpressed by such twisted reasoning. "Any such position," he noted,

could not be publicly declared, and if it were known, would raise a storm in itself. I am quite sure that the Province and community would raise a strong protest against recognition of any church by the State. I cannot think

²⁵ PAC, Ernest Lapointe Papers, Vol. 35, file 162, Mozzoni to Lapointe, 27 July 1937; RG 25, Vol. 812, file 627, Mozzoni to King, 1 Oct. 1937.

²⁶ King Diary, 8 Oct. 1937.

²⁷ RG 25, Vol. 812, file 627, Skelton to prime minister, 8 Oct. 1937.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Christie to Skelton, 13 Oct. 1937.

of any single issue in Canada which would be more dangerous than that which would be created by such an issue. If there ever was reason for permitting sleeping dogs to lie, and not raising an issue where one can be avoided, it is in this case.

Lapointe and others agreed that it would not be wise to invite controversy. The Quebec ministers also felt that the Canadian bishops would not appreciate the appointment of a nuncio who would have more authority over them than the delegate did; King considered this an additional reason for not taking action. King preferred merely to restate what he had told Cassullo in August 1936. He put the whole issue down to Mozzoni's lobbying, possibly at Rome's instance, and saw it as arising primarily from the precedence issue. He was surprised that the larger issue "of the possible control which the Church might exercise politically" had been lost sight of.²⁹

The issue was far from settled, however, as Lapointe took umbrage at the decision. Not only did he believe it was wrong "nationally, internationally, and *politically*," he also charged "that opposing a flat refusal to a courteous request and such a reasonable one, is offending my own personal dignity."³⁰ He preferred to say that because of present circumstances "the question should be left for future decision." This would be something less than a blunt refusal.³¹ King was astonished by Lapointe's attitude and amazed by the complete change in view of two or three of the Quebec ministers. While he himself had no personal objection to diplomatic relations with the Vatican, he felt that no other question would create a greater issue in the country. In the end, he blamed the strains and stress of the day which were affecting men's judgements, leading them either to create differences or fail to avoid them.³²

The idea of using a nuncio to control the church in Canada provoked some musings in the upper echelons of External Affairs. In practice, Christie disliked the implications.

If there should arise some case of "keeping down the priests" and the Government should get into discussion with a Nuncio about it, what would be the position?... He would be in a position, like any other diplomatic agent, to get a *quid pro quo* out of the Government for any step he took. He and the Roman Catholic Church, or the Pope, would be getting, in some sort, a voice inserted directly into our government decisions. This would

²⁹ King Diary, 19 Oct. 1937.

³⁰ RG 25, Vol. 812, file 627. Extract, Lapointe to King, 19 Oct. 1937, emphasis in original.

³¹ *Ibid.*, King to Mozzoni, 26 Oct. 1937, draft letter, minuted.

³² King Diary, 29 Oct. 1937.

not be a mere matter of the Government or Prime Minister presiding, so to speak, over some internal compromise between different elements of our people... On the contrary, it would be a joint act with an external power to solve an internal problem.

The acceptance of a nuncio, Christie felt, would acknowledge “at least that the Pope has some voice – ‘equal,’ ‘adequate,’ or what not – anyhow some sort of voice in your state, some sort of place in your polity. The thin edge – and not so thin at that.” All this was avoided in the case of a delegate, who was no more than an episcopal functionary. Skelton felt that Christie’s point was well taken. “You can’t get such influence exerted,” he responded, “without a price – and rarely without publicity. I think the present arrangement much more satisfactory from the government’s standpoint so far as Catholics go – while as to the Protestants!”³³

Finally, a brief reply prepared outside of External Affairs and incorporating a variation of Lapointe’s desired wording was sent to Mozzoni on 2 November. In his usual tactful fashion Mozzoni responded by expressing his displeasure, while noting that he interpreted the answer as merely postponing the question for a few months.³⁴ This “minatory tone” was too much for Christie. “Apparently,” he informed Skelton, “he’s a tough guy.”

When he returns to the charge in “a few months” I think the reply ought to be rested on the analysis of what is really involved and the practicalities thereof (he now openly talks of “The official position of the Catholic Church”). That would be conclusive without being exciting and would not give him an opening for the sort of stuff he is now indulging in.³⁵

Lapointe’s more moderate reply had left the question open. However, no further approach was made.

In September 1938 King considered sending Lapointe to Rome to discuss the resurgence of clerical intervention in Quebec politics, hoping to repeat the success achieved by Vatican intervention during Laurier’s time. At the last minute, however, King had fears about the ramifications of any publicity that might accrue to the mission.³⁶ These fears were shared by Skelton, who felt the plan had far more chance of doing harm than good. Conditions were not the same as in Laurier’s time; there was no definite issue provoking clerical interference such as the Manitoba school question.

³³ RG 25, Vol. 812, file 627, Memorandum by Christie, 26 Oct. 1937; Skelton to Christie, n.d.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, King to Mozzoni, 2 Nov. 1937; Mozzoni to King, 3 Nov. 1937.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Christie to Skelton, 6 Nov. 1937.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, King to Lapointe, 8 Sept. 1938 (not sent); King Diary, 8 Sept. 1938.

“The assertions of control,” he noted, “are more secret and impalpable. It would be impossible, if a controversy arose later, to frame a definite statement of precisely what the issues were. If challenged, the clergy would say the only issue was Communism versus anti-Communism.” By the same token Rome, too, had changed, and there would be no prospect of avoiding publicity.

It would be difficult to find any liberal sentiment or any disinterested or sympathetic consideration in Rome today. If the Holy See were to undertake to exercise restraint on the clergy of Canada, it would only do it for a quid pro quo, and the bargain would be a hard one. The acceptance of a Papal Nuncio would be the first and not the only condition... The Pope does not act alone. A score of people in Rome would know the developments in a week, and all Quebec would know what had happened (and a good deal that had not happened) in a fortnight.

The net result of any discussion and consequent publicity might be to irritate the Quebec clergy still more and to anger Protestant sentiment.³⁷

With the onset of war the question of diplomatic relations with the Vatican was left in abeyance. With the return of peace, however, the issue was raised by the Provincial of the Dominican Order and by Cardinal Villeneuve, who made a direct approach to the prime minister in November 1945.³⁸ The cardinal suggested that such a step would have great consequences for Canada domestically, considering the large proportion of the population that was Catholic, and externally with regard to Canada’s standing among the nations. In reply, King observed that External Affairs’ hard-pressed resources were committed to the establishment of diplomatic missions in a number of countries which had opened offices in Canada during the war. He feared discussion in Parliament “which might well develop into a serious public controversy, which could not be without prejudice to the whole question of Canada’s representations in foreign countries.”³⁹

On 23 December 1945 the appointment of a second Canadian cardinal, Archbishop McGuigan of Toronto, was announced. This was seized on as a mark of favour by the Vatican towards Canada which, in the opinion of the Dominican Provincial, cried out for a movement by Canada towards the establishment of relations. At the least, a special representative could be sent to the consistory. That suggestion was in fact discussed by Cabinet on 24

³⁷ RG 25, Vol. 812, file 627, Skelton to King, 9 Sept. 1938, minuted by King.

³⁸ Department of External Affairs (hereafter DEA), file 7951-40, Gaudrault to Robertson, 29 July 1945; Villeneuve to King, 15 Nov. 1945.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, King to Villeneuve, 5 Dec. 1945.

January 1946 but was turned down.⁴⁰

In January 1947 the Canadian Embassy in Washington sounded out the State Department concerning the American position, learning that President Truman had promised a group of Protestant representatives that the American wartime mission to the Vatican would soon be terminated (in fact it survived for another three years). However, there was strong Catholic pressure for the creation of a permanent mission and the acceptance of a nuncio in Washington. This information was passed to Minister of External Affairs St. Laurent by his under-secretary, L.B. Pearson, who also observed that the forthcoming appointment of a Canadian Ambassador to Italy would inevitably raise the question of relations with the Vatican as well. Meanwhile, the Department of External Affairs was receiving extensive correspondence from religious organizations, both Protestant and Catholic, arguing the pros and cons of relations with the Vatican.⁴¹

As prime minister, Mackenzie King had a very fine line to walk in maintaining Canadian unity in the face of religious and linguistic differences. As head of a party with strong support in French Canada he could not afford to alienate Catholics but by the same token he had to placate English-speaking Protestants – a very delicate balancing act, indeed, but one that King paid very close attention to. On the one hand, he told a delegation from the Canadian Council of Churches in 1946 that as long as he was prime minister there would be no Canadian Ambassador to the Vatican;⁴² on the other hand, he did not hesitate to take a personal part in the Marian Congress activities held in Ottawa in June 1947, though being careful not to have the government officially involved. He offered, instead, to entertain the visiting cardinals at his Laurier House residence. He was also very careful to attend a luncheon in honour of the Moderator of the United Church, which he felt would provide “a complete answer to anyone who might be critical of my extending a like greeting to the heads of the Roman Catholic Church.”⁴³

King was nevertheless careful in his speech-making at the Congress not to say anything to which Protestants could take exception, while making a point of referring to his attendance at that luncheon. He enjoyed. he wrote in his diary.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Gaudrault to Robertson, 11 Jan. 1946; PAC, Privy Council Office Records, RG 2, Series 16, Cabinet Conclusions, 24 January 1946

⁴¹ DEA, 7951-40, H. H. Wrong to Pearson, 8 Jan. 1946; Pearson to St. Laurent, 15 Jan. 1947; J.B.C. Watkins to Pearson, 3 Feb. 1947.

⁴² United Church of Canada Archives (hereafter UCCA), Records of General Council, series 6, file 1, Secretary, Canadian Council of Churches to Rev. J.E. Davidge. 20 May 1946.

⁴³ King Diary, 13 and 19 Mar. 1947.

making a profession of my faith in the face of the nation and to an audience composed of different denominations but on an occasion in which, as Prime Minister. I was honouring the representative of the head of the oldest church, and doing this in a manner which could not possibly have antagonised any reasonable opponent of Roman Catholicism but rather in a manner which showed how completely in fundamentals we all share the essentials of Christianity. I really had a feeling that the proceedings were having the effect of bringing the different denominations closer together. That, after all, is what is most needed today.⁴⁴

Though he was pleased by compliments he received on his speech, King was perturbed by a certain amount of confusion surrounding his speech and the billing of the subsequent reception as an official government function, which it was not. He was greatly pleased by the success of the luncheon which he provided to the visiting dignitaries.⁴⁵

King was too sanguine concerning the results of the Congress. The Protestant religious press denounced it as a ploy by the Catholic Church “to give itself the appearance of being the national Church, sole guardian and defender of its faith and soul” while the carrying of a statue of the Virgin from Three Rivers to Ottawa “in solemn procession, with kneeling faithful all the way,” was likened to “the pagan practices of Isis and Osiris.”⁴⁶ King, recognizing this hostility, referred in a conversation with St. Laurent some months later to the intolerance of many Protestants and what he believed to be the increasing feeling in the country that the Catholic Church sought to make Canada its future stronghold. “The Marian Congress had fostered this idea and it was a circumstance that had to be reckoned with.”⁴⁷

In the meantime, relations with the Vatican remained a matter of interest to the Department of External Affairs, which continued to receive representations from the public. Though aware of the difficulties, St. Laurent was determined that the arguments in favour be given due consideration. One departmental official thought the flow of mail might be cut down if advocates were quietly informed that any representative to the Vatican have to be a Protestant. The rationale for establishing relations had changed since the 1930’s when the issue had arisen over the question of precedence for the apostolic delegate in Ottawa. Arguments in favour included the large

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 18 June 1947.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 19 June 1947; memorandum, 20 June 1947; 21 June 1947.

⁴⁶ *United Church Observer*, 1 May 1947, p. 27 and 15 May 1947, p. 4. See also 15 July 1947, p. 4; *Presbyterian Record*, Aug. 1947, p. 182 and Sept. 1947, pp. 195-6, 207; *Canadian Baptist*, 15 June 1947, p. 1.

⁴⁷ King Diary, 9 Oct. 1947. For a supporting view of anti-Catholic feeling see Watson Kirkconnell, “Tide of Anti-Catholic Propaganda Rising,” *Saturday Night* (4 Jan. 1947), p. 6.

proportion of Catholics in the population, problems of common interest with the Vatican, the presence in Rome of the headquarters of most Canadian religious orders and congregations and the awakening of interest of Catholics, particularly French Catholics, in Canadian foreign policy. An argument not advanced in this correspondence, but of most interest to External Affairs, was the value of the Vatican as an information centre. Arguments against stressed the violation of the principle of the separation of church and state, the unwarranted recognition of one church, the recognition of the temporal power of the pope and the division of Canadians along religious lines.⁴⁸

In May 1947 Ambassador to France Georges Vanier, visiting Rome at the same time as the apostolic delegate, was told by him that the pope would agree to the appointment of an internuncio who would not automatically be dean of the diplomatic corps and would accept a non-resident ambassador from a European country other than Italy. Acting Secretary of State Montini (later Paul VI) told him that the Vatican would be pleased by an appointment but understood the difficulties. In April 1948 Montini told a group of Canadian journalists that the Vatican would welcome a Canadian representative but could not take the first step. However, these overtures were not pursued.⁴⁹

Later in 1948, with St. Laurent poised to succeed Mackenzie King as prime minister, Cardinal McGuigan enquired as to the political feasibility, in the face of non-Catholic opposition, of establishing relations with the Vatican which, he noted, the apostolic delegate keenly favoured. It was important to know before the upcoming meeting of Catholic bishops in October in order to avoid "useless propaganda and unwise statements." While he personally desired to see the step taken, St. Laurent admitted that the resulting controversy would only be prejudicial to Catholic interests. Although progress had been made in fostering a more tolerant attitude throughout the country, "all these matters which can be occasions for the clashing of sentimental differences of viewpoint are still apt to be very explosive." He feared that Liberal party opponents would make an issue of the lack of diplomatic relations with the Vatican, an effort which would be aided by an episcopal statement. As a Catholic prime minister St. Laurent would be in a particularly touchy position, since those opposed to establishing relations

⁴⁸ DEA. 7951-40, St. Laurent to Pearson, 26 Mar. 1947; Escott Reid to Pearson, 31 Mar. 1947; J.B.C. Watkins. "Canadian Representation to the Vatican," 30 Apr. 1947.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Ambassador in France to Secretary of State for External Affairs, Des. 303. 5 May 1947; Ambassador in Italy to Secretary of State for External Affairs. Des. 187, 27 Apr. 1948.

would resent what would appear to them to be taking an unfair advantage of their confidence. Any pronouncement by the Bishops would be regarded by them as proof that the establishment of these diplomatic relations was not done for political considerations but as an act of religious respect to the Holy Father.⁵⁰

The strength of non-Catholic feeling was revealed in 1949 by a concerted campaign of opposition to a Vatican appointment. Protestant ire was aroused by press speculation, including some favourable editorial comment, particularly in the influential *Globe and Mail*, which felt that a Canadian Minister at the Vatican would have access to "one of the world's great clearing houses" for information.⁵¹ This resulted in an enquiry about government policy from W.J. Gallagher, the General Secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, who noted that "it might lead to differences of opinion among the people which could add greatly to the already sufficient tensions of Canadian national life."⁵² He was informed by St. Laurent that the government had not adopted any policy. While the Vatican was seen as a useful centre of information, it was realized that many Canadians would regard an appointment as a religious gesture. Any controversy would be unfortunate "when it is so necessary for the Christian Churches to unite their strength against the aggression and persecution to which they are subjected, regardless of their denominational affiliations, by Communist Governments."⁵³ On 18 February Cabinet considered the possibility of accrediting the Ambassador to France to the Vatican but decided to take no action at that time.⁵⁴

On 22 February representatives of the United Church spoke with Escott Reid, deputy under-secretary of External Affairs. He stressed that if an appointment were made it would not be religiously motivated; the Vatican's expert foreign service made it a valuable source of information, while the Catholic Church was one of the West's strongest allies in the Cold War. The United Church representatives expressed scepticism about the Vatican's

⁵⁰ PAC. Louis St. Laurent Papers, Vol. 19, McGuigan to St. Laurent, 21 Aug. 1948: St. Laurent to McGuigan, 26 Aug. 1948.

⁵¹ *Globe and Mail*, 7 Feb. 1949, p. 6.

⁵² DEA, file 7951-A-40, Gallagher to Pearson, 8 Feb. 1949. The Canadian Council of Churches represented the Church of England in Canada, the Baptist Federation of Canada, the Churches of Christ (Disciples), the Evangelical United Brethren Church, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Reformed Episcopal Church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the United Church of Canada, the Salvation Army, and the Society of Friends and had as affiliates the National Councils of the Y.M. and Y.W.C.A. and the Student Christian Movement of Canada.

⁵³ DEA, 7951-40, St. Laurent to Gallagher, 21 Feb. 1949.

⁵⁴ RG 2, Series 16, Cabinet Conclusions, 18 Feb. 1949.

value as an anti-communist ally and asserted that an appointment would recognize a position of primacy for the Catholic Church and would contravene the separation of church and state. These views were reiterated in a resolution adopted by the United Church's Board of Evangelism and Social Service on 2 March.⁵⁵

Further letters of protest were received from the Canadian Council of Churches and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, C. Ritchie Bell, who explained Protestant fears that the anti-communism of the Vatican might encourage a holy war which would threaten civilization. Many would resent what would be seen as an attempt "to line up another largely Protestant country behind the anti-communist crusade of the Vatican." Bitterness would particularly follow from the fact that such countries had the task of curbing communism, "while many of the countries where the Roman Catholic faith predominates are honeycombed with Communism."⁵⁶

The Canadian Council of Churches reported a poll of its Executive Committee which opposed diplomatic relations with the Vatican by thirty-four to two. It was stressed that the Council was not an anti-Catholic organization and did not desire to engage in religious controversy. However, its members were strongly opposed to recognition of the political power of the Catholic Church or of the Vatican as a state. They believed that an exchange of envoys "would be inconsistent with the separation of Church and State and with the equality of the Churches before the law which prevail in Canada, and would be unjust to the other Churches." They denied that such a step would be an effective means of safeguarding democracy or would make Canada privy to information that could not be obtained through other channels. Finally, such action would cause dissension and disunity in Canada "at a time when it is most desirable that it should be avoided."⁵⁷ Both St. Laurent and External Affairs Minister Pearson responded that the government had not yet adopted any policy on the matter, the latter observing that the problem was being approached "from the stand-point of the value of the post to Canada as a whole and not in order to give official approval to the policies and principles of any one church."⁵⁸

Public comment on both sides of the issue was vociferous. The *Canadian Baptist*, while stressing the issue of separation of church and state, also denounced "Roman Catholic intolerance, totalitarianism, and self-interest,"

⁵⁵ DEA, 7951-40, Reid to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 22 Feb. 1949, and 15 Mar. 1949, enclosing resolution of 2 Mar. 1949.

⁵⁶ DEA, 7951-A-40, Bell to St. Laurent, 22 Feb. 1949.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, W.J. Gallagher to St. Laurent, 4 Mar. 1949.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, St. Laurent to Bell, 7 Mar. 1949; Pearson to Bell, 14 Mar. 1949.

instancing the persecution of Protestants in Spain and South America. “Protestants,” it concluded, “should not be forced by government action to enter into any alliance with the Vatican which will, in effect, constitute official approval of Catholic policies and principles.”⁵⁹ Similar arguments were made by the *United Church Observer* and the Anglican periodical *Canadian Churchman*, both of which felt that the papacy was in no position to pose as the defender of freedom of religion or as a bulwark against communism.⁶⁰

The *Globe and Mail* criticized opposition as sectarian in nature, reiterating that Canadian diplomacy would only be aided by representation at a centre that was “in the forefront in the battle against the Marxist doctrine. That is what makes it a diplomatic centre of the highest importance and interest.”⁶¹ The *Canadian Register*, the major Catholic paper, agreed that opposition was “based upon the beliefs and interests of sectional religious bodies.” The question was one of practical usefulness and on those grounds Canada ought clearly to be represented at the Holy See. The Vatican was of utmost importance to the resistance to communism and the organization of peace. Furthermore, the papacy possessed moral power only.

Canadian Protestants have no Christian reason for objecting to Governments in their mutual diplomatic arrangements giving a place to one who particularly represents moral power and supra-national interests... A Canadian representative to the Holy See would contribute to the mobilization of Christian forces against the aggression of World Communism.⁶²

Some of the most extravagant arguments in favour of an appointment were heard on the floor of the House of Commons, where a small number of French Canadian members raised the issue from time to time.⁶³ René Jutras, on 24 February 1949, praised the Catholic Church as “the strongest rampart against communism... the one force that will never surrender under any circumstances.” Its diplomats were the most prestigious of any and “epitomize the Christian spirit.” A few days later Lionel Bertrand pictured the

⁵⁹ *Canadian Baptist*, 1 Mar. 1949, p. 3.

⁶⁰ *United Church Observer*, 15 Mar. 1949, p. 4; *Canadian Churchman*, 21 Apr. 1949, p. 123. The *Presbyterian Record* printed Bell’s letter to St. Laurent, Apr. 1949, p. 102.

⁶¹ *Globe and Mail*, 8 Mar. 1949, p. 6. See also article written from Rome by *Globe and Mail* publisher George McCullagh, 30 Apr. 1949, pp. 1-2 and editorial, p. 6.

⁶² *Canadian Register*, 12 Mar. 1949, p. 4; 27 Aug. 1949, p. 4.

⁶³ See, for example *Debates*, 1944, Vol. 1, pp. 57-60; 1947, Vol. IV, p. 3353; 1948, Vol. IV, p. 3615 and Vol. V, p. 4487. The Quebec Assembly unanimously passed a motion favouring an appointment; see *Le Devoir*, 24 Feb. 1949, pp. 1, 3 and 9.

pope as one who stood above human conflicts, his diplomacy originating from God and “showing the world the only formula for true progress, for real security and enduring peace.”⁶⁴ Such views, while they might reflect the sentiments of devout Catholics, were not likely to impress others.

Faced with this cacophony of opinion, Pearson sought information on the value of a Vatican mission from the British Foreign Office and the American State Department. The former reported the acquisition of useful material concerning Catholic tactics in relation to communism, while on a more mundane level the mission was useful in arranging papal audiences for prominent British visitors. The latter valued access to Vatican sources of information, especially from behind the Iron Curtain, and the opportunity of explaining American policy to the Holy See.⁶⁵

It is evident from these soundings that the government was willing to establish a mission to the Vatican if it was convinced that there were sufficient benefits. It was also clear, however, that domestic political considerations remained the overriding factor. A survey of 15 March revealed that between March 1945 and August 1947 approximately eighty-five letters favouring a Vatican appointment had been received, all from French Canadians, along with twenty-four letters of protest from English-language correspondents. An hiatus had followed until February 1949, from which point twenty-six protests had been received against one favouring letter.⁶⁶ It was later discovered that these departmental statistics were unbalanced because at that time the prime minister’s office was not passing along to External Affairs letters of approval received from French Canadians.

Protestant spokesmen continued to be heard. On 5 April 1949 Dr. J. R. Mutchmor, Secretary of the Board of Evangelism and Social Service of the United Church, called on Under-Secretary Arnold Heeney to follow up the resolution passed by the Board on 2 March. Mutchmor was extremely blunt in his comments on the Catholic Church. He argued that it was an authoritarian institution and thus not a bulwark for the defence of freedom, particularly calling into question its record in Hungary, Poland and Italy. Not only did he refuse to accept that the Catholic Church was an effective opponent of communism, he felt it was wrong to ignore the benefits to be derived from communist thinking, which would influence present civilization in the same way that the French Revolution had served as an impetus towards liberalism.

⁶⁴ *Debates*, 1949, Vol. 1, pp. 867, 981.

⁶⁵ DEA, 7951-40, Secretary of State for External Affairs to High Commissioner in United Kingdom, tel. 526, 21 Mar. 1949 and to Ambassador in United States, EX-750, 21 Mar. 1949; High Commissioner in Great Britain to Secretary of State for External Affairs, tel. 610, 23 Mar. 1949; Ambassador in United States to Secretary of State for External Affairs, WA-835, 24 Mar. 1949.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Escott Reid to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 15 Mar. 1949.

He threatened that, if the government made a Vatican appointment, the United Church would rally public opinion against the move. In reporting to the prime minister, Heeney stated his concern with the line taken by the “extremely emphatic” Mutchmor.⁶⁷

It was evident, as the embassy in the United States was informed, that there was a sharp division of opinion along denominational lines and that it was “becoming difficult to consider [the issue] from the point of view of the benefit and value to our foreign service of opening the mission.” Rumours in the press had led to the influx of Protestant opposition. However, newspapers such as the *Globe and Mail* and the *Ottawa Citizen* had expressed approval of the move and a desire to discuss it reasonably. The French press was naturally supportive, stressing the value of the Vatican as an information source and the prestige Canada would gain from having an envoy there, while readily conceding that any appointee would have to be an English Protestant. It was hoped that the government would not be intimidated by “les protestations préventives de quelques pasteurs égarés par le fanatisme ou l’incompréhension.”⁶⁸

On 8 April a delegation from the Canadian Council of Churches met with the prime minister and sixteen members of the Cabinet to discuss a variety of issues including relations with the Vatican. The Council’s General Secretary explained that they had been under pressure to issue a statement on the matter but had refrained from doing so to avoid arousing controversy. The prime minister reiterated that the government viewed the issue as political, not religious, but would weigh the advantages to be derived from an appointment with the disadvantages that might arise from misunderstanding and controversy. He stressed that the government “could give no commitment that an appointment would at no time be made but the question was not under consideration at the present time nor was it one that would be dealt with expeditiously,” which seemed to satisfy the members of the delegation.⁶⁹ This statement was perhaps a trifle disingenuous, given the soundings that External Affairs had just made.

Following this flurry of activity the issue died down. A departmental memorandum of early July noted that the volume of letters had fallen off

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Heeney to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 5 Apr. 1949: Memorandum for the Prime Minister, 7 Apr. 1949.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Secretary of State for External Affairs to Ambassador in United States, des. 1040, 9 Apr. 1949; *Le Soleil*, 3 Mar. 1949, p. 4. See also 30 Mar. 1949, p. 4 and 5 Dec. 1949, p. 4; *Le Devoir*, 14 Feb. 1949, p. 1, 28 Mar. 1949, p. 1 and 11 May 1949, p. 1.

⁶⁹ DEA, 7951-A-40, N.A. Robertson to Heeney, 11 Apr. 1949, enclosing R.G. Robertson. “Interview of the Canadian Council of Churches with members of the Government,” 9 Apr. 1949.

considerably and that only five letters in favour had been received since February. “The desire for representation is no less than it was,” the prime minister commented in response, “but I am being trusted to act if and when it becomes possible.”⁷⁰ It was at this time the department discovered that it was not being kept informed of favourable responses received by the prime minister's office, thus skewing its statistics. It was also learnt that the form reply sent to French-language correspondents was more positive in tone than its English-language counterpart, as it stated that “the question of naming an Ambassador to the Vatican is one which is of lively interest to Mr. St. Laurent.”⁷¹

Although the outpouring of protests from Protestant groups had dwindled, the Canadian Council of Churches was determined not to be caught napping. General Secretary W.J. Gallagher, concerned lest their comparative silence be misinterpreted, suggested that each church might well write to the prime minister merely to reaffirm its opposition. Although he personally felt that the government would prefer not to raise the issue, he was adamant that “if the issue is to be forced by those who advocate such an appointment, its opponents find themselves under the necessity of expressing their view.”⁷²

In February 1950 a departmental memorandum summarizing expressions of public opinion to date was prepared. In the period from 1 February 1949 to 15 February 1950, 150 letters opposing an appointment were received as against 128 in favour, 80 percent of which were from Quebec. A rigid division of opinion along denominational lines was evident. While editorial opinion in the French-language press was vociferous, comment in the English press was quite limited. Six newspapers advocated an appointment, while the Ottawa *Citizen* argued that the question should be decided on its merits. This memorandum was sent to the prime minister but no action resulted.⁷³

The department received corroborative evidence of the diplomatic value of a Vatican envoy from American and Dutch sources. Following the

⁷⁰ DEA, 7951-40, Heeney to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 5 July 1949, minuted by St. Laurent.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, T.W.L. MacDermot to the under-secretary, 14 July 1949; European Division to Escott Reid, 20 July 1949.

⁷² UCCA, Records of General Council, series 6, file 1, Gallagher to Dr. G.A. Sisco, 8 Feb. 1950. Cf. C.L. Cowan, Presbyterian Moderator, to St. Laurent, 17 Feb. 1950, printed in *Presbyterian Record*, Apr. 1950, p. 109.

⁷³ DEA, 7951-40, Escott Reid to the minister, 21 Feb. 1950, enclosing T.W.L. MacDermot. “Public opinion in Canada concerning the appointment of a Canadian representative to the Vatican,” 21 Feb. 1950; Pearson to the prime minister, 23 Feb. 1950. Favourable papers were the *Globe and Mail* and the *Telegram* (Toronto), the *Gazette* (Montreal), the *Examiner* (Peterborough), the *Star* (Windsor), and the *Leader Post* (Regina).

resignation of the President's personal representative, State Department officials explained that they would like to see a regular diplomatic appointment as the papacy was not only increasingly interested in current international issues but was privy to information from within the communist bloc. Dutch Ambassador Van Roijen told a departmental official that his government's minister at the Vatican "had been well received from the outset, was on extremely good terms now and was given information in the frankest way."⁷⁴

St. Laurent himself remained convinced that an appointment would be advantageous to Canada, he told a delegation from the Canadian Catholic Federation of Labour, but opposition remained too strong. In the opinion of the *Globe and Mail* this amounted to saying that Canada should be represented at the Vatican but would not be because of "certain unwarranted fears and prejudices." If the prime minister believed an envoy would be useful he ought to send one.⁷⁵ On the other hand, the Kingston *Whig-Standard*, published by Liberal Senator Rupert Davies, argued that it was "of far greater importance to the development of this great country that we should steer clear of religious strife, than that we should appoint a representative to the Vatican, or to any other sovereign state."⁷⁶

Increased urgings were heard from Catholic groups; in April and May 1950 a printed resolution was received from eighty-five Knights of Columbus Councils. Catholic agitation brought an immediate response from the Canadian Council of Churches. Their opposition to an appointment was firmly reiterated in a letter to the prime minister, a copy of which was sent to each Cabinet minister.⁷⁷ The balance of forces clearly remained unchanged.

A note of bitterness was added to Catholic-Protestant relations in the fall of 1950 with the proclamation by the pope of the dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Though hailed by the *Canadian Register* as "the last jewel in Mary's crown" it was unanimously denounced in the Protestant press as unhistorical, unscriptural and a further source of division within Christendom. The *Canadian Baptist* decried the "obscurantist position" of the pope, while a sermon printed in the *Canadian Churchman* assailed it as further proof of "the totalitarian character of the government of the Roman

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 3455-40, H.H. Wrong to Pearson, 21 and 24 Feb. 1950: 278-40, T.W.L. MacDermot to the under-secretary, 11 Jan. 1950.

⁷⁵ *Globe and Mail*, 15 Mar. 1950, p. 6.

⁷⁶ *Whig-Standard*, 5 Apr. 1950, p. 4.

⁷⁷ DEA, 7951-40, MacDermot to under-secretary. 23 May 1950: 7951-A-40, W.J. Gallagher to St. Laurent, 26 May 1950.

Church.”⁷⁸ Though not directly relevant to the question of diplomatic representation, it did nothing to improve the climate of interchurch relations.

The overwhelming nature of the domestic political obstacles to action was made clear in October 1951 when President Truman announced the appointment of General Mark Clark as United States Ambassador to the Vatican, being later forced to back down in the face of public and congressional opinion. The controversy naturally spilled across the border. “Who can deny,” the *Canadian Register* asserted,

that it is religious group interests alone which prevent Canada being represented as she ought to be at the Holy See? Realities have constrained U.S. Presidents to challenge bigoted opposition and the same realities must make themselves felt in Canada with the growth of its international responsibilities.⁷⁹

The Protestant press, however, stood firm, reiterating that any such move by the Canadian government would be “disastrous to the morale and the unity of the nation.”⁸⁰

The issue was raised again in 1953 in the context of a federal election. Lester Pearson skated quite carefully around the question when asked in Parliament about the government’s intentions. An appointment to the Vatican, as to other areas, was under continual consideration but no decision had been taken. When pressed as to the objections to such an appointment he refused to be drawn, leaving the question an open one.⁸¹ The wisdom of such caution became apparent during the election campaign. Speaking at Thetford Mines, Quebec, St. Laurent stated that this was not the time to make an appointment to the Vatican because of the religious controversy it would engender but predicted that the day would come when such action would be acceptable to Canadians generally.⁸² That comment, innocuous as it might seem, drew forth a pledge to oppose such a step “in every way open to us” from the Anglican Primate and the Presbyterian and United Church Moderators. “If such an appointment is ever made,” the trio wrote, “it will not only destroy the unity of this Nation, but also it will tend to identify Canada with a form of totalitarianism with which our people have no sympathy

⁷⁸ *Canadian Register*, 26 Aug. 1950, p. 4; *Canadian Baptist*, 2 Oct. 1950, p. 3; *Canadian Churchman*, 16 Nov. 1950, pp. 351-3.

⁷⁹ *Canadian Register*, 3 Nov. 1951, p. 4.

⁸⁰ *United Church Observer*, 15 Nov. 1951, p. 4. Cf. *Canadian Baptist*, 15 Nov. 1951, p. 3 and 15 Jan. 1952, p. 3.

⁸¹ *Debates*, 1952-3, Vol. V, pp. 4860-1

⁸² *Windsor Star*, 21 July 1953.

whatever.”⁸³ The *United Church Observer* declared its determination to continue “to oppose the suggested appointment as unnecessary, a break with history and tradition, and as setting a dangerous precedent.”⁸⁴ The *Canadian Baptist* called on the government “to have a proper regard for the intense feelings in this matter of all the citizens of Canada.”⁸⁵

Such determined reaction to a vague statement revealed the immovability of Protestant opinion. Such opinion was not monolithic, as was evidenced by two correspondents who challenged the stance taken by the *Canadian Baptist*, and doubtless there were other non-Catholics who shared their views. Nevertheless, as the *Canadian Baptist* asserted, its position was based “not on hearsay or casual observation, but on opinions expressed by official bodies and resolutions properly voted on in democratic procedure.”⁸⁶ There can be no doubt that Protestant opinion was overwhelmingly opposed to an extent that the government dared not flout it. Indeed, one political columnist felt that the issue had cost the government votes in Ontario in the election.⁸⁷

There was no inclination to raise the issue again for almost two decades. Then, in an atmosphere of both increased secularism and growing ecumenism, diplomatic relations with the Vatican were finally established in 1969 by a prime minister, Pierre Trudeau, who was determined “to cut through much of the hesitation which has prevented us from solving problems in the past.”⁸⁸

Protestant opposition to diplomatic relations rested fundamentally on the principle of the separation of church and state and on the view that such a step would unjustifiably favour the Catholic Church. There was, however, also an active element of hostility and fear present, as the Vatican was viewed as the staunch opponent of liberty. For that reason Protestant spokesmen scoffed at the idea that the Holy See was an important ally against communism, eagerly pointing out that it was mainly Catholic countries that had succumbed. Although the *Canadian Register* observed that geographical proximity to the Soviet Union was the key factor,⁸⁹ such arguments had little effect on those who, at the extreme, professed to see little or no difference between Catholicism and communism. “True,” one minister put it,

the Roman Catholic Church stands for God, and communism stands for godlessness; but does the one really believe in freedom any more than the other? Is not one a totalitarian Church and the other a totalitarian state?

⁸³ DEA, 7951-A-40, W.F. Barfoot, Bp. of Edmonton, W.A. Cameron and A.A. Scott to St. Laurent, 4 Aug. 1953.

⁸⁴ *United Church Observer*, 15 Aug. 1953, p. 4.

⁸⁵ *Canadian Baptist*, 15 Sept. 1953, p. 3.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 15 Oct. 1953, p. 3.

⁸⁷ J.A. Stevenson, “Ottawa Letter,” *Saturday Night* (24 Oct. 1953), p. 16.

⁸⁸ George Radwanski, *Trudeau* (Scarborough, 1978), p. 160.

⁸⁹ *Canadian Register*, 16 Sept. 1950, p. 4.

Both believe in rigid ‘party’ discipline. Both have an infallible leader. . .
Both have systems of thought control – the followers are told what they
must think.⁹⁰

The Protestant attitude was a mixture of principle and prejudice. The politicians, on the other hand, recognizing the impossibility of divorcing the church from political affairs, sought to use the church for their own ends. To Cahan, a contented French-Canadian clergy could help ensure domestic peace in Canada; to Bennett, strong leadership among English Canadian Catholics could make the church a buttress of the social order during a time of depression and questioning of the system. Each sought to influence church appointments to achieve his goals. Some of King’s Cabinet ministers felt that the church in Quebec could be used to control the attitudes of the people in such areas as labour unrest, while King himself contemplated seeking Vatican assistance in opposing clerical interference in Quebec politics. It remained for the bureaucrats in External Affairs to point out that the influence of the church could not be obtained without a *quid pro quo* which might well prove too costly. External Affairs officials did come to feel that the church, through its international network, could provide a useful point of contact, but this was considerably different from seeking to use the church for domestic purposes. Protestant opposition, however, remained too potent a factor and the politicians too cautious to risk creating a religious controversy.

⁹⁰ Cited in J. S. Moir, *Enduring Witness: A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (Toronto, 1975), p. 257.