

“Reasonably Well-Organized”: A History of Early Aid Administration

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The early history of Canada’s foreign aid already has its hero: Herb Moran. Born in Peterborough, Ontario in 1908, Moran practised corporate law during the 1930s, before heading to war in 1940. After serving with distinction in Italy and Northwestern Europe, he joined External Affairs in 1946 as head of its Economic Division, becoming assistant undersecretary in 1949, ambassador to Turkey in 1952, and high commissioner to Pakistan in October 1957. A blunt, no-nonsense diplomat with a head for detail, Moran returned to Ottawa in the summer of 1960, when he was tapped to head Canada’s brand new External Aid Office. The product of a recent short and lopsided rivalry between the departments of External Affairs and Trade and Commerce, the External Aid Office gathered Canada’s sprawling foreign aid programs into one centralized unit, reporting directly to the secretary of state for external affairs.

As so often happens, the victors write the history. Moran’s admirers, Keith Spicer and David Morrison among them, celebrate his appointment as finally bringing professional order to the amateur chaos that had marked Canada’s aid program since 1950. The program’s recent past, an emerging generation of aid officers proclaimed, was chronically disorganized, demoralized, aimless and unreflective, “a career backwater” populated by “misfits.”¹ Inaccurate and unfair, this judgment minimized and obscured

a decade of aid history, leaving later scholars largely ignorant of Canada's early aid administrators, their ambitions, their challenges, and their setbacks. This chapter is a brief introduction to the men before Moran: the hapless T. J. Brook; R. G. "Nik" Cavell, who dominated Canada's aid program from 1951 to 1957; and Orville Ault, who led it from 1957 until 1960. A close look at their bureaucratic remnants suggests that they were much better administrators than their successors allowed. Cavell, in particular, was a strong leader, whose pragmatism, profile, and institutional ambitions foreshadowed the unruly tactics that Lewis Perinbam, profiled in chapter 7, adopted a quarter century later.

Ottawa's postwar liberal internationalism, especially evident in its strong support for the UN, drew Canada into the aid business even before the Second World War had ended. Through the mid-1940s, Ottawa supplied technical advice and a small number of experts on an ad hoc basis to many UN specialized agencies, which usually recruited help directly through appropriate federal government departments. That casual approach changed at the end of the decade. In May 1949, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent's Liberal cabinet endorsed UN plans for an expanded technical assistance program, estimated to top \$30 million, and agreed to participate in a funding conference the following spring.² Soon after, in January and May 1950, Commonwealth foreign ministers gathered in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and then Sydney, Australia, to develop their own plans for a program of capital and technical assistance. In June 1950, cabinet approved a contribution of \$850,000 to the UN's expanded assistance program, sending another \$400,000 to the program developed by the Commonwealth Consultative Committee on South and Southeast Asia.³ Amid concerns in both the PMO and UN headquarters about potential conflict and duplication, Ottawa officials began to consider how to coordinate Canadian technical assistance.

In early November 1950, the deputy undersecretary of external affairs, Escott Reid, summoned representatives from fifteen departments to consider the issue. A subcommittee under George Heasman, the veteran director of the Trade Commission Service, met twice over the next week, ultimately deciding to divide the field into two. Since foreign aid impinged so closely on foreign affairs, it was readily agreed that the diplomats would remain in charge of policy, formally receiving and replying to all requests for help. Trade and Commerce, with its close contacts with domestic industrial and

engineering concerns, would administer the program through a director and staff housed within the trade department.⁴

Though officials were certainly aware of the dangers involved in dividing jurisdiction, the unorthodox arrangement reflected the exciting novelty surrounding foreign aid. For deputy external affairs minister Arnold Heeney, whose views were shaped by a long stint as PCO clerk, foreign aid represented a modern and increasingly “interdepartmental” policy-making environment, where “no hard and fast logical case could be made that the operation should be the responsibility of any one Minister.”⁵ In keeping with that expansive ethos, the terms of the deal were generous. The new director, styled “the executive officer,” was to handle all publicity, contracts, and staffing. He was “generally free” to correspond with external agencies and foreign governments. An interdepartmental group on technical assistance, chaired by External Affairs, would coordinate policy, but its members were promised access to the deputy ministers on the supervising Interdepartmental Committee on International Organizations (ICIO).⁶ At its last meeting of the year, cabinet approved the arrangement. Canada, along with the Netherlands, France, and the United States, became one of just four countries with an office dedicated to technical assistance.⁷

Initially, at least, making the interdepartmental arrangement work proved virtually impossible. From the start, External Affairs harboured “serious reservations” about the first head of the new Technical Assistance Service, T. J. Brook, a former trade commissioner who had worked in India in the late 1930s. In contrast to local observers at the British high commission, who judged him “most energetic,” “extremely efficient,” and “fully alive” to Indian needs, Canadian diplomats doubted that Brook could ever overcome his prosaic trade commissioner roots.⁸ “I do not believe,” wrote Robert Ford, the tart-tongued chief of UN Division, “that experience in the Department of Trade and Commerce will adequately fill in the background which it is important he should have or emphasize sufficiently the main principles which should guide the work of the unit.”⁹

The diplomats soon had all the evidence they needed to substantiate their prejudice against Brook. In early January, Trade and Commerce floated a draft press release announcing his appointment but omitting any reference to UN programs and referring to Asians by the dated and racially charged term “Asiatics.”¹⁰ When External Affairs vetoed the release, Brook

leaked it, prompting UN Division to rethink its attitude toward interdepartmental cooperation. “We are now thinking of the interdepartmental group as a very much more active supervisory body than we had at first envisaged,” diplomat John Holmes wrote Heeney. “With this change in approach, I think we should consider the group as the instrument of External Affairs influence.” Holmes abandoned plans to lend Brook a diplomatic advisory officer, instead assigning one of his staff, Jack Thurrott, to keep “a close watch on the unit.”¹¹

Through the spring of 1951, Brook and his Trade and Commerce colleagues began to flesh out the technical assistance program. Meanwhile, Thurrott and Holmes, who belittled his staff as “five girls,” focused on “fixing and limiting” his autonomy.¹² This was no easy task, for Brook insisted on his right to deal directly with foreign agencies when policy was not at issue. For instance, when Hugh Keenleyside, head of the UN’s technical assistance program, asked for Canadian civil servant Irene Baird to help with a UN program, Brook secured her release directly from her deputy minister and the Civil Service Commission, only informing External Affairs as she boarded the train for New York.¹³ Similarly, Brook sent both UN Division and Canada’s mission in New York into paroxysms of rage when he arranged to see UN technical assistance expert Howard Daniel alone.¹⁴ This kind of thing went on all the time, Thurrott complained in June, in this instance, incited by an “especially objectionable” case where Brook had allowed a woman clerk to accept a UN fellow “in her own name.”¹⁵ Clearly, Heeney warned the minister, L. B. Pearson, “Mr. Brook is not competent.”¹⁶

Indeed, the “brains trust” in External Affairs had begun to cast about for Brook’s replacement in late February 1951, soon after cabinet approved an initial \$25 million contribution to a new Commonwealth scheme for capital assistance, the Colombo Plan. Managing this new and vastly larger venture would require a more experienced man, one who could perhaps also take over the existing technical assistance program. Wynne Plumptre, head of the Economic Division at External Affairs, nominated Nik Cavell in early March.¹⁷

Captain George Reginald Cavell was an unusual sort of civil servant in drab postwar Ottawa. Born in Hampshire, England in 1894, young George ran away from theological school, eventually joining the Indian Army—Calvary Branch, he claimed—in 1913. A charismatic and gifted storyteller,

he saw active service along the Burma-Chinese border, in the Moplah Rebellion, and on the North-West frontier. There, as he coolly noted for awestruck Canadian journalists decades later, he “played with the tribes and watched my colleagues get murdered.”¹⁸ Following the First World War, Cavell remained in India until the mid-1920s, working as a land settlements officer in the Punjab, a military horse breeder, a magistrate, and a plague prevention officer—“hellish gruesome that one!”¹⁹ After an unsuccessful spell as a farmer and journalist in South Africa, he joined the private sector, running branches of the American multinational, Automatic Electric, in China, Japan, and, beginning in 1934, Canada.

Life in Canada transformed Cavell. The world war against Nazi totalitarianism and the postwar confrontation with Soviet communism sharpened his liberal and Canadian instincts. “If freedom and the sanctity of human personality are to be preserved in the world,” he proclaimed, “it is from its last citadel—this North American Continent—that the work will have to be done.”²⁰ That view was doubtless reinforced by his closest Canadian connections. Significantly, he was among the handful of notable progressives who gathered at the Chateau Laurier in July 1940 to press Mackenzie King’s government to total war and a postwar future of “more human welfare, freedom and security.”²¹ During and after the war, he became a fixture in the liberal-nationalist Canadian Institute of International Affairs and its domestic counterpart, the Canadian Institute of Public Affairs (the Couchiching Institute), becoming chairman of both by the late 1940s and a prolific speaker on global affairs.

At the same time, he drew close to the young Liberals around Brooke Claxton, the rising cabinet minister and Montreal reformer, whom he advised on Liberal Party policy and political advertising. His best friend was W. H. Herbert, a senior Liberal Party organizer and strong Canadian cultural nationalist, with whom he joined forces in the postwar cultural agency, the Canada Foundation. “The fostering of our basic cultures here in Canada is one of the most useful things any of us can do,” Cavell declared. “We are in the process of building a nation composed of people of widely differing racial backgrounds and the only hope for us is to knit it all together into something which we can call Canadian.”²²

By the mid-1940s, Cavell had shed his military rank and adopted a variation of his mother’s maiden name, Nicolini, as his own. “R. G. Cavell,”

he explained to Herbert, “was a horrible English fellow, who had all the faults and more, usually attributed to those insular Islanders. . . . this English fellow was reincarnated. In his reincarnation, the Gods gave him a better fate: he was born a Canadian and took the simple name of Nik Cavell.”²³

Increasingly disenchanted with his corporate life and his American directors, Cavell (and his Liberal backers) had been searching for the right government job since 1944.²⁴ Plumptre and External Affairs embraced Cavell as an accomplished businessman with extensive experience in South Asia and a sound grasp of international affairs, championing him as just the kind of “really strong man” that Ottawa needed to give “initiative” to its technical and capital assistance programs. He was expected to match donor needs with Canadian capacity, generate public support for aid, and reinforce the fragile political consensus among ministers. Nurtured on the imperial adventures of Rudyard Kipling and G. A. Henty, Canada’s decision makers were perhaps seduced too by the whiff of exotic romance about Cavell, whose CV listed “tribal diplomatic and espionage work” among his accomplishments.²⁵ Cavell delighted Ottawa audiences by claiming that Gandhi had even called him a “whiskey-swilling swashbuckler.”²⁶

Cavell was known too in the Department of Trade and Commerce. He knew C. D. Howe, the powerful Liberal minister, and Fred Bull, his deputy, as well as several senior officials. His liberal views on international trade, the need for expanded Canadian markets, and “more effective coordination between government and business” echoed those of Ottawa economic policy makers.²⁷ Pearson and Howe cleared the appointment in June, Brook was released in July, and Cavell took over the enlarged International Economic and Technical Cooperation Division in September. The unit would administer both Canada’s technical assistance and its Colombo Plan capital assistance programs under the general supervision of two interdepartmental committees: one for technical assistance and a more senior one for capital aid, soon known as the “Colombo Group.” “It is a clear case,” the *Ottawa Citizen* gushed, “of fate at the throttle of the train of human events.”²⁸

Cavell’s personal history made him an ideal appointment. As an apparently authentic product of colonial India, he helped slot Canada’s new development role in Asia into the familiar British Empire, or increasingly Commonwealth, framework through which postwar Canada liked to



FIGURE 2.1
The whiff of romance surrounding Nik Cavell is reflected in this caricature from the menu of one of the countless service club lunches that he routinely addressed to promote the Colombo Plan. (Source: Greg Donaghy/Richard Bingham)

approach Pacific affairs. Though that continent throbbed with the promise of revolutionary upset, Cavell himself was reassuring evidence that Canada's development project represented a secure status quo. In the person of Cavell, as in the Colombo Plan itself, racialized tensions between the white North and the Global South were temporarily resolved within a vague and comforting sense of "Britishness."²⁹ Yet, simultaneously, as Cogan's chapter in this collection makes clear, postwar governments in Canada linked Colombo Plan aid to the country's growing identity as a global "middle power." Cavell's self-professed Canadianism thus also reinforced and personified the tie between Ottawa's aid efforts and postwar manifestations of Canadian national identity. Moreover, Cavell's entrepreneurial roots and transnational business background signalled that Colombo Plan aid would remain closely associated with the Canadian state's search for new markets abroad, a characteristic of Emily Rosenberg's "promotional state" that had emerged in both the United States and Canada in the first half of the twentieth century.³⁰

Cavell's style and "impish" personality drove the interdepartmental aid program forward.³¹ He was confident, well-liked, and not easily

intimidated. To the obvious consternation of Bull, the Civil Service Commission, and the Treasury Board, he began by successfully demanding a salary of \$12,000 annually, the same as his minister's.³² He styled himself "Administrator," a more original title than "Director," and one that deliberately echoed the commanding role played by his pioneering US counterpart, Economic Cooperation Administrator Paul Hoffman.³³ Like Brook, he issued a press release on his appointment, again ignoring, diplomat Escott Reid noted archly, the UN entirely.³⁴ "Like the great movie actress [Greta Garbo]," Cavell told friends of his singular style, "I like to be alone."³⁵

Cavell's views on aid reflected the prevailing liberal-internationalist orthodoxy in postwar Ottawa. He accepted humanitarian justifications for Canadian aid as obvious and "unanswerable," or beyond debate.³⁶ He was doubtful, however, of its economic and developmental significance. Despite his colourful personality, he remained a practical businessman, who was inclined to dismiss Western aid as "stop gaps."³⁷ Though doubtless aware of emerging debates about the best forms of foreign aid—he was good friends with the early American development theorist Wilfred Malenbaum from MIT—Cavell mostly placed his faith in the invisible hand of Adam Smith's liberal capitalism. "Whilst our aid programme to South-East Asia is valuable in putting some kind of floor, no matter how thin, under their living," he wrote deputy trade minister Bull, "I think we are all agreed that it will not really do much towards the rehabilitation of so many millions. . . . In the last analysis, the only way they can really rehabilitate themselves and raise the standards of living of their people is to get into the flow of world trade."³⁸ At best, the Colombo Plan and other aid programs helped "survey the problem," clearing the way for the forces of "Finance and Industry" to usher Asia into "the orbit of our prosperity."³⁹ Meanwhile, Cavell cautioned his former Bay Street cronies in Toronto's financial hub, Asia would not be a viable market for Canadian exports or welcome Canadian direct investment for years to come.⁴⁰

Aid for Cavell was essentially political (though obviously there might be small ancillary trade and development benefits). The cold war confrontation of the 1950s between Western liberalism and Communist totalitarianism, he argued, was simply the latest manifestation of a timeless struggle between freedom and tyranny. In Cavell's stark view, the context in Asia pitted newly independent India, with its British democratic traditions,



FIGURE 2.2

Cavell was a genius at promotion. Pakistani High Commissioner M. O. Ali Baig, Deputy Under-Secretary R. M. MacDonnell, and Nik Cavell are shown in front of a heavy grader being shipped to Pakistan for the Warsak Hydro-Electric and Irrigation Project. (Source: Editorial Associates, LAC e008303260)

against communist China, with other Asian nations waiting on the sidelines for a winner to emerge. Aid was clearly a weapon in Canada's cold war arsenal. Aid, Cavell campaigned on behalf of the St. Laurent government, was largely intended to give Asians "confidence in their government and thus offer them an attractive alternative to following China behind the Iron Curtain and into the slavery of the Communist state."⁴¹ In private, he was franker. "The whole emphasis of the West is wrong," he wrote in 1955. "It is, of course, right and proper that we should try to raise their living standards, but did you ever hear of their minor revolutions from Iran to West Bengal which had poverty and hunger as its motif? You never did. What these people shout about is a place in the sun, recognition as a

people, recognition as nations, the right to run their own show their own way—that is what worries them more than their terrible poverty.³⁴²

Consequently, Cavell placed enormous emphasis on person-to-person contacts over both the character of Canadian aid and its administrative needs. He routinely left Ottawa in mid-February for a three- or four-month swing through Asia, directly engaging the continent's leading industrial, financial, and political figures in joint exercises defining the next year's aid allocation. "Above all," he explained to his Canadian interlocutors, "we must convince these people that we are concerned about them, that we want them to be prosperous, that we want them to remain free and sovereign states. . . . That means that we must really get to know them and understand their difficulties. We must forget the silly idea that they are mysterious inscrutable beings; they are people just as we are people, with the same hopes and fears and aspirations."³⁴³

Cavell was hardly a perfect fit. His annual Asian tour, with its outspoken critiques of American foreign policy, European missionaries, and the monarchy, dismayed Canadian diplomats, who often assigned one of their own to clean up his messes. "In his own inimitable manner," diplomat Ed Ritchie complained, "Nik will undoubtedly cover a great deal of ground and see a vast number of people but someone else will have to collect and evaluate the hard factual material needed."³⁴⁴

Administrative detail left Cavell cold. Characteristically, the woeful filing system that he found on his arrival in Trade and Commerce—"this is quite the most urgent job"—remained broken five years on. "We have all had trouble of one kind or another in locating reports," complained his deputy. "We have never had a proper system of filing."³⁴⁵ Similarly, Finlay Sims, the comptroller-secretary at Trade and Commerce, regularly took Cavell to task for his unit's lax financial controls.³⁴⁶

More problematic, Cavell resented the "obstruction and ignorance" he encountered in Ottawa, and the interdepartmental structure that supervised his work.³⁴⁷ As he ramped up his operation through 1952, the small staff in External Affairs struggled to keep up with the flood of paperwork, especially with regard to technical assistance. Ritchie's Economic Division, which inherited aid responsibilities from UN Division early that year, firmly resisted all efforts to reform and simplify the system. Since Colombo Plan funds formally rested with External Affairs, which also chaired the

interdepartmental advisory committees and was responsible for missions abroad, he explained, it would be “impossible for us to contract entirely out of even the routine parts of the technical assistance operation.”⁴⁸

Ritchie also rejected requests from Canadian diplomatic missions themselves that they be allowed to deal directly with Trade and Commerce. Even pressure from Max Wershof, legal advisor and assistant undersecretary, and undersecretary Jules Léger failed to render Ritchie more accommodating. The standoff irked Cavell, especially when his staff too readily turned to External Affairs for policy advice. “I am in charge of Colombo Plan operations,” he complained. “A problem arises which is really for my decision . . . [and] I am not even asked about it!”⁴⁹

Yet Cavell’s accomplishments were not inconsiderable, and he deserves more credit for successfully managing the many administrative challenges that he faced. Not least, despite the unsatisfactory administrative arrangements with External Affairs, he maintained good relations with the genial Ritchie and his successor, Louis Couillard. His outbursts—“blowing off steam”—passed quickly, replaced by a cheerful can-do attitude that set the tone for the entire program.⁵⁰ For instance, he breezily dismissed one squabble with External Affairs by explaining that “my only objective is to get the work done expeditiously, and within that objective I do not care very much who does what or how.”⁵¹ Ignoring External’s strictures, he frequently wrote to missions and trade commissioners informally, boasting that he had “a reply before External or anyone else has even got around to preparing a first draft.”⁵²

Cavell built his organization almost from the ground up. Though critics complained of staff turnover and Cavell’s ad hoc approach, in fact, he arrived with a coherent and ambitious staffing plan that included a field coordinator posted to Colombo, with responsibility for the region. As the aid program mushroomed in the early 1950s, the division’s establishment grew from just six staff in 1950–51 to twelve in 1951–52 to nineteen by 1954, doubling again by March 1958. While junior administrators moved rapidly from portfolio to portfolio, competent senior staff remained in place. Robert W. Rosenthal became Cavell’s assistant administrator, responsible for staffing and personnel issues, a role he occupied from 1952 until the end of the decade. From 1952 to 1954, John MacDonald headed the division’s Technical Co-operation Service; he was succeeded by D. W. Bartlett, who

also remained until late in the decade. Both men were supported throughout by assistant chief J. T. Hobart, one of a team of “conscientious and able” staff.⁵³ Arrangements were equally steady on the capital assistance front, run by Frank Pratt, a knowledgeable engineer, who remained until 1960. By the fall of 1954, Cavell was largely content with his domestic arrangements, assuring senior managers in Trade and Commerce that his outfit was “reasonably well-organized.”⁵⁴

There was only one significant organizational gap: abroad. But Cavell was making progress even there, a field that External Affairs jealously safeguarded as its own. In early 1954, he campaigned to post “semi-technical” officers to India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, where they would manage relations with recipient governments, help refine project proposals, and support local Canadian experts.⁵⁵ This was a large step for External Affairs to take. Eventually, however, the two departments agreed to appoint David Mills to Pakistan in 1955 on an experimental basis as arguably Canada’s first foreign aid field officer.⁵⁶ Other appointments would surely follow. “As I see it,” Bartlett wrote Mills, “eventually our people should occupy the about the same position vis-à-vis Ottawa and the rest of the Mission as Commercial Secretaries do at present.”⁵⁷ In other words, aid seemed on its way to becoming an autonomous branch of Trade and Commerce.

As Jill Campbell-Miller points out in chapter 1, there were any number of complications in delivering capital and technical assistance in the early 1950s. But on the whole, both the interdepartmental process and Cavell’s unit muddled along, delivering where it mattered. Canada’s technical assistance program grew steadily through the decade. In 1951–52, it welcomed 64 trainees into Canada, a number that climbed to 192 in 1954 and 313 in 1956. The program usually sent just over 30 Canadian experts abroad each year, and helped recruit between 80 and 100 Canadians annually for UN aid programs.⁵⁸

Canada’s capital assistance program gathered momentum too. After a disappointing start in 1951–52 and 1952–53, it settled into a predictable routine that pushed available Canadian aid out the door. Typically, Cavell toured Asia early in the year, troubleshooting existing projects, soliciting new ones, and encouraging the most likely. Recipient countries presented detailed project proposals in the spring, when Ottawa specified what kinds of aid Canada could supply, favouring capital goods, commodities, and,

finally, wheat. The early backlog of uncommitted funds disappeared by 1954 as donor and recipients—a group that steadily moved beyond India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka to embrace Indonesia, Burma, and other parts of Southeast Asia—grasped what was needed and what was available.

Though effective enough, Cavell's structure did not long survive his departure in late 1957, when he left Ottawa to take up a new role as high commissioner in Sri Lanka. His reassignment coincided with a dramatic surge in Canada's aid program, leading to renewed and increasingly bitter inter-departmental rivalry. Beginning in the spring of 1957, Louis St. Laurent's government and its Progressive Conservative successor under John Diefenbaker began expanding foreign aid expenditures and programs. Pressure from other international donors, especially the United States, the stepped-up pace of decolonization, and domestic considerations prompted the increase. In March 1957, cabinet set aside \$10 million for the newly independent island nations of the British West Indies. Within two years, ministers had bumped the Colombo Plan up from \$35 million to \$50 million, added a concessionary program to subsidize Canadian wheat sales, and increased contributions to UN and World Bank multilateral programming.

The implications of this growth were not lost on External Affairs, which set up a dedicated unit, Economic Division II, to handle the growing volume of work in October 1958. By early 1960, diplomat Geoffrey Bruce estimated, Canada was spending \$75–80 million annually on aid. "It is perhaps no exaggeration to say," he ventured, "that the formulation and implementation of this Canadian economic aid programme comprise one of the most important and influential elements in Canadian foreign policy."⁵⁹ Clearly, the diplomats in External Affairs coveted this juicy bureaucratic prize.

Cavell's replacement, Orville Ault, was no less aware of the stakes at play. Initially trained as a rural teacher in eastern Ontario, he returned to Queen's University for his BA degree during the 1920s, ultimately attaining a doctorate in psychology at Edinburgh University in 1934. He loved Scotland and embraced its values. "There was little deviation from what was routine, what was honest, what was wholesome," he later recalled.⁶⁰ An expert adult educator, he served during the Second World War with the Canadian Army Overseas as its director of education, setting up the "Khaki University," a widely admired educational service intended to boost troop morale and speed their transition to civilian life. Retiring as a lieutenant colonel,

Ault rose steadily through the ranks of the postwar Civil Service Commission, eventually heading its recruitment and training divisions, and taking on UN technical assistant roles in Israel and Ghana during the 1950s. Like Cavell, he was well connected. A partisan Progressive Conservative, he had served overseas in 1945 with Diefenbaker's powerful trade minister, Gordon Churchill, whom he considered a friend.

Ault hit the ground running. On the margins of the Montreal Commonwealth trade conference in September, Churchill had encouraged Ault to develop plans to reorganize Canadian foreign aid. Ault's appreciation of aid was arguably narrow, favouring educational exchanges over capital development, but there was no denying his ambitious bureaucratic vision. Given the growing volume and breadth of Canadian bilateral and multi-lateral aid, he urged the minister to create one single agency, a Bureau of Technical and Economic Aid, to manage all aid. Headed by a commanding director general, it would report through the deputy trade minister directly to the minister. A deputy minister-level External Aid Committee and a small cabinet committee would provide limited oversight and guidance.⁶¹ Ault's future shimmered brightly. Soon after his formal appointment in December, the International Economic and Technical Cooperation Division was elevated into the Economic and Technical Assistance Branch (ETAB), a larger and more independent operating unit.

Over the next eighteen months, however, Ault's plans suffered a series of unhappy reverses. First, as word of his reforming work spread, External Affairs responded in December 1958 with a plan to transform the "Colombo Group" into a formal Interdepartmental Committee on External Aid Policy with more frequent meetings and representation from the Privy Council Office, an ally of the department. Backed by Wynne Plumptre of Finance, with whom Economic Division II consulted in advance, diplomats Doug LePan and George Glazebrook swept aside Ault's efforts to keep the discussions "exploratory," and struck the new committee at a group meeting on 23 December.⁶² "Plodding" and "shy" by his own account, with few friends in official Ottawa, whose liberalism he fiercely resented, Ault was ill equipped for a bureaucratic showdown as the committee exerted tighter control over his program. The diplomats were "demanding" and "contentious," recalled Ault, making his role progressively more difficult. "The conflicting and sometimes confusing attitudes among those who were

by choice or by appointment associated with Canada's aid programme," he recorded in his memoirs, "made progress slow and requests [sat] on desks for weeks."⁶³

Initially unfazed by the prospect of closer outside oversight, Ault moved ahead with his reform plans in the new year, revising and elaborating on his early ideas. These were strongly supported by deputy trade minister John English, an experienced trade commissioner with a long-standing interest in aid programming, and Churchill. Ault and English reviewed their plans with Norman Robertson, deputy minister of external affairs, and Doug LePan, now an assistant deputy minister at Finance, in early March without encountering serious opposition.⁶⁴ Thus encouraged, Ault appointed D. W. Bartlett to head a new division, Programme Planning, whose forecasting function represented the first step in his developing campaign for a comprehensive stand-alone aid agency.⁶⁵ But as the new unit settled in, trouble struck for a second time: English was stricken by illness in the early summer of 1959, dying early in the new year. His replacement, first on an acting basis and then full-time, was James Roberts. A hard-nosed Toronto businessman recruited by Diefenbaker's government to tackle Canada's perennial trade deficit, Roberts was focused exclusively on exports and was utterly uninterested in aid. Ault's reforms stalled.

There was one final indignity to come. In early 1960, Economic Division II began to hatch its own reorganization plans. Though inspired by concerns about coherence and administrative efficiency similar to Ault's, they were much less well conceived. Initially, D. R. Taylor, the division's head, simply proposed to relocate the government's entire aid apparatus into External Affairs.⁶⁶ Anticipating stiff opposition from Trade and Commerce, he subsequently recommended grouping senior staff from External, Trade and Commerce, and Finance into External Affairs to oversee aid policy, leaving ETAB to administer aid under a junior official, turning the clock back to 1951.⁶⁷ Finally, Taylor and Ed Ritchie, the assistant under-secretary responsible for economic affairs, adopted a scheme not unlike Ault's; it proposed creating an entirely independent aid agency under a director general, a deputy minister-level position reporting to the secretary of state for external affairs.⁶⁸ In mid-May, backed by foreign minister Howard Green, Ritchie sold the concept to the deputy minister of finance, Ken Taylor, and Roberts, who was only too happy to rid himself of the aid

portfolio. Ault, who was not even informed of the meeting, was brusquely pushed out of his job.

The establishment of the External Aid Office, Canada's first stand-alone aid agency, in November 1960 under Herb Moran signalled a new era in the administration of Canada's foreign aid program. Yet, key legacies of the 1950s and the program's first three administrators persisted, helping to shape the culture surrounding Canadian ODA long into the future. Most important, the decision to divide jurisdiction between the departments of External Affairs and Trade and Commerce opened vital space for aid bureaucrats to develop their own distinctive culture. The relative lack of hierarchy and a "can-do" ethos, and the often informal administrative procedures adopted by Brook, Cavell, and Ault, set off the tiny International Economic and Technical Cooperation Division as unique and different. Its early singularity was further reflected in the ambitions for an independent overseas service that were nurtured by both Cavell and Ault, and widely shared among their staff. Indeed, this brief survey of aid administration suggests an operation that was more motivated, ambitious, and capable than credited in the literature.

Both bureaucratic division and emerging corporate aid culture reinforced (and were reinforced by) the outsized role occupied by Cavell, a part inherited to a lesser extent by Ault. Unlike most civil servants of the decade, aid administrators were expected to be part bureaucrat, part overseas salesman, and part domestic publicist. They enjoyed a high profile and were often seen to singlehandedly embody their program. Ambitious and comfortable operating on both the bureaucratic and political level, Cavell, especially, pioneered a personality-driven leadership style that became a defining feature of later Canadian aid administrations.

Finally, this split jurisdiction and distinctive aid culture complicated efforts to manage the naturally competing interests of the program's founding departments, External Affairs, Finance, and Trade and Commerce. Administrative divisions and different cultures generated an ingrained sense of interdepartmental rivalry that hampered aid distribution in the 1950s and beyond, defining the program's relations with External Affairs and other government departments into the next century.

Notes

- 1 Keith Spicer, *A Samaritan State? External Aid in Canada's Foreign Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 102–5. The charges are repeated in David Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide: A History of CIDA* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998), 30–33. The Spicer-Morrison view is echoed in Jill Campbell-Miller, “The Mind of Modernity: Canadian Bilateral Foreign Assistance to India, 1950–60” (PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 2014), 8, 282.
- 2 Memorandum from Secretary of State for External Affairs (SSEA) to Cabinet, 20 December 1949, reprinted in Hector Mackenzie, ed., *Documents on Canadian External Relations (DCER)*, vol. 15: 1949 (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 1995), 405–6.
- 3 Extract from Cabinet Conclusions, 12 June 1950, reprinted in Greg Donaghy, ed., *DCER*, vol. 16: 1950 (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 1995), 623–24, and 1226–27.
- 4 Draft Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on International Organization (ICCO), Document No 1, 22 November 1950, RG 74, acc. 80/1-103, vol. 1, file 36-1-1, LAC.
- 5 Minutes of the ICIO, 30 November 1950, RG 74, acc. 80/1-103, vol. 1, file 36-1-1, LAC.
- 6 See minutes of the subcommittee meetings on November 6 and 10, RG 74, acc. 80/1-103, vol. 1, file 36-1-1, LAC.
- 7 External Affairs Circular Document, A3/15, 11 January 1951, RG 74, acc. 80/1-103, vol. 1, file 36-1-1, LAC.
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- 9 R. A. D. Ford to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs (USSEA), 13 December 1950, RG 25, vol. 6442, file 5475-DU-8-40, LAC.
- 10 J. W. Holmes to USSEA, 8 January 1952, RG 25, vol. 6442, file 5475-DU-8-40, LAC. On “Asiatics,” see Stefan Huebner, *Pan-Asian Sports and the Emergence of Modern Asia, 1913–1974* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2016), 105.
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- 23 Cavell to Walter Herbert, 5 June 1961, Herbert Papers, vol. 12, file: Cavell, LAC.
- 24 See correspondence on Brooke Claxton Papers, vol. 26, file: Cavell, LAC.
- 25 A. D. P. Heeney to Fred Bull, 28 June 1951, RG 25, vol. 4306, file 11336-6-40, LAC.
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- 39 Cavell, "Technical Assistance and the Colombo Plan," *Statements and Speeches* 51/38.
- 40 Cavell to Harold Fry, 4 May 1955, RG 74, acc. 80-1/103, box 4, file 36-1-11, LAC.
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