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National Defence Headquarters  
Ottawa, Canada  
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BY: *W. A. H.* FOR DHIST NDHQDATE: *10 May 85*

Work of the Public Relations Officer,  
C.M.H.Q.

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Canadian Military Headquarters,  
2 Cockspur Street,  
London, ENGLAND.

The Director  
Historical Section,  
General Staff,  
National Defence Headquarters,  
Ottawa, Canada.

Sir,

I have the honour to make a further report in the capacity of Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q. This report deals with the Public Relations organization which is in operation at this Headquarters.

2. I spent a good part of 3 January conferring with Captain W.G.ABEL, Public Relations Officer, C.M.H.Q., on the work of his office. Captain Abel drove me to the Record Office at Action, where we talked with Captain H.M.Jackson on the special subject of the identification and filing of official photographs. I had noted that many excellent photographs of the activities of Canadian troops in England, which are being preserved for future historical or other purposes, were being filed without any identification other than the exiguous caption permitted by the censors for publication - e.g., "A Canadian battalion training with light machine guns somewhere in England". I pointed out the need for adding details of dates, places, units, etc., on the prints preserved for future use. Both Captain Abel and Captain Jackson recognized the desirability of this, and the matter is now in hand. They believe that it will be possible to supply full captions for the pictures already on file.

3. Captain Abel lent me copies of a number of memoranda which assisted me in tracing the development of his office, and in addition he and his staff gave me a good deal of verbal information. The account given below is based upon these



sources.

4. Captain Abel's office is situated on the top floor of Canada House, next door to the building housing Canadian Military Headquarters. Communication between the two buildings is possible by a door on the third floor level.

DEVELOPMENT AND PRESENT ORGANIZATION OF THE  
PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE.

5. It is evident that the formation of some sort of Public Relations organization began to be contemplated fairly soon after the decision was taken to despatch Canadian troops to the United Kingdom. Captain Abel made suggestions for such an organization in a memorandum addressed to Lt.-Col. E. L. M. Burns, O.B.E., M.C., presumably written by invitation and dated 23 Nov. 1939. At this time the idea seems to have been to set up an office which would supervise both "News Service and Historical Records", a reminiscence evidently of the Beaverbrook organization in the last war; but the Records side was, of course, ultimately left to other agencies. Captain Abel was finally appointed on 25 Jan. 1940, about a month after the arrival in England of the main body of the First Canadian Division.

6. The original establishment was one officer (Captain Abel himself) and one stenographer. This soon proved inadequate and in a memorandum for Lt.-Col. Burns written 23 Feb. 40 Captain Abel pointed out that he was paying an additional stenographer himself and that his daughter was assisting him voluntarily. By this time his office was giving considerable assistance in the making of motion pictures. In a further memorandum addressed to the G.S.O. 1, C.M.H.Q., on 19 Apr. 40, Captain Abel asked for an assistant with the rank of Lieutenant.

7. Captain Abel now has such an assistant (Lieut. Eric GIBBS) and his organization also includes a commissioned photographer (Lieut. L. A. AUDRAIN). The Public Relations Officer works under the supervision of the General Staff Branch, C.M.H.Q.



FUNCTIONS OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS  
OFFICER.

8. The chief business of the Public Relations Officer is to maintain liaison with, and give assistance to, the various agencies by which information concerning the Canadian military forces in the United Kingdom is disseminated to the public. His office is a sort of clearing-house and rendezvous for Canadian newspaper men, and while he does not issue press releases in the ordinary sense he sees that the press is informed when stories of Canadian activities are about to "Break", and in general makes it his business to give the newspapers full opportunities to obtain such material. He conducts press parties, and takes responsibility for their observing the rules concerning security, etc. In this way he relieves senior officers, in great part, of the burden involved in frequent contacts with the press; though it is not the policy to exclude newspapermen from interviewing such officers when they have good reason to wish to do so. He assists radio and motion picture agencies (particularly the official agencies of the Canadian Government) in getting material about the Canadian troops; and in general (to quote his memorandum of 19 Apr.40) "the duty of the P.R.O. is to provide every facility that makes publicity easy to secure". Captain Abel is presumably assisted in carrying out his duties by the contacts which he made in civil life before the war, when he was in the advertising business in London.

STILL PHOTOGRAPHY.

9. An important function of the Public Relations Officer's staff is the provision of "still" photographs - for immediate use in the press, for official purposes of the moment, and for the sake of historical record. A large collection of these Canadian official pictures is already in existence; judging by the examples I have seen, their quality is excellent and their historical value very considerable. Most of these pictures are taken by Lieut. Audrain; but Mr Louis JARCHE, who



was a member of Lord Beaverbrook's photographic organization in the last war, sometimes replaces him, and occasionally Captain Abel takes a picture himself. Mr Jarché has an establishment in the city and does the Public Relation Officer's darkroom work by contract; the P.R.O. has no darkroom of his own.

10. In addition to taking pictures for release to the press, the P.R.O's photographers take a certain number which are required by the military authorities for official purposes - pictures, e.g., of parts of mechanical transport vehicles which failed under strain, for scientific study; or of tactical or other exercises, for use in training. They also take what Captain Abel calls "record pictures", which could not be published during the war but which will have historical interest - e.g., Canadian experiments with various types of road-blocks, and the actual performance of tanks when faced with different varieties, are full illustrated. This last form of photographic activity is obviously one that should, from the historian's point of view, be encouraged.

#### RADIO RELATIONS.

11. Captain Abel's relation to the work of broadcasting organizations is described by him as being similar to his relation to the work of newspaper correspondents; that is, within proper limits he makes every effort to obtain for them the material they desire concerning the activities of Canadian troops.

#### MOTION PICTURE WORK

12. Captain Abel, Lieut. Gibbs and Lieut. Audrain spend, I gather, considerable time in helping with the preparation of Canadian war films (notably the "Canada Carries On" series). The National Film Board of Canada is represented in the United Kingdom by Mr L.R. AVERY of the Department of Trade and Commerce, who has an office in Canada House. The Film Board employs a commercial organization known as Film Centre to



direct its pictures, and the Realist Film Company to photograph them; the Public Relations Officer supplies a certain number of ideas, assists the photographers in getting at the material they want, and gives general help.

13. The Public Relations Officer has no film unit of his own, though one has been proposed. He does, however, sometimes obtain excellent record films at low cost by getting commercial newsreel companies to take pictures of which he subsequently purchases copies. On such an occasion a company may take 3,000 feet of film, of which it uses only a small proportion; but Captain Abel can purchase the whole 3,000 feet for perhaps one pound.

14. Captain Abel mentioned that the Canadian Corps has improvised a film unit of its own, apparently by purchasing cameras and setting personnel obtained within the Corps to work with them.

#### CLIPPING SERVICE.

15. The public Relations Officer subscribes to a clipping service which supplies copies of all references made to the Canadian forces in the British press. After being examined in his office the material is forwarded to the Record Office at Acton.

#### CANADIAN CORPS PUBLIC RELATIONS.

16. Captain Abel described the Public Relations organization maintained at the headquarters of the Canadian Corps (late 7th Corps). The Corps has a Public Relations Officer who has the duty of conducting press parties in the Corps area and co-operates with Captain Abel in such matters. This appointment is shortly to be taken over by Capt. G. Purcell, late of the Canadian Press. The Corps film unit has been described above. The Corps also has its own still photographers, likewise apparently men taken from the ranks for the purpose. Finally a representative of the Canadian Press (at present Mr Ross MUNRO) is permanently stationed at Corps Headquarters, where he is



given quarters, a batman, etc., and has the task of reporting matters of interest for the benefit of the Canadian public. All this information is as reported by Captain Abel.

#### CANADA HOUSE PUBLIC RELATIONS.

17. There is no central coordinating agency for Canadian public relations and publicity organizations in the United Kingdom. Canada House, the headquarters of the High Commissioner for Canada, has its own Press Officer, Mr James SPENCE, the person who was referred to by Mr Lash, the Director of Public Information at Ottawa, as his most important contact in this country. Mr Spence handles the public relations of the Royal Canadian Air Force (whose overseas headquarters are situated in the same building as C.M.H.Q.) as well as those of Canada House. Mr Spence is not a Canadian. I have not yet met him. I gather that he and Captain Abel have not seen eye to eye on all occasions.

#### MISCELLANEOUS.

18. Captain Abel mentioned that he occasionally encounters difficulties of a type which (I suspect) are perennial and perhaps inevitable with people performing tasks like his in war-time. He apparently feels that military reticence in connection with the release of information sometimes goes beyond the demands of security, and that there are some officers who simply prefer to give out nothing and thereby escape possible criticism by higher authorities. He also remarked that some commanding officers have placed obstacles in the way of his photographers; but I gather that hostility to the idea of being photographed is not universal.

19.

#### NOTE ON DISTRIBUTION AND INDEXING OF STILL PHOTOGRAPHS.

19. As described to me by Captain Abel, the distribution of official photographs taken by his staff (apart from prints supplied to the press in the United Kingdom) is as follows:



one (extra-large) copy to Director of Public Information, Ottawa, for press purposes; one to War Office, London; one to Record Office, Acton; one to Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa; one retained by the censor in the United Kingdom; one for the Public Relations Officer's office file. The Archives copy has been forwarded via Acton, and it seems possible that this particular set of pictures are actually in the Record Office at Ottawa. Incidentally, pictures from C.M.H.Q. apparently have not been reaching Mr Lash, although they have been duly sent; I have given the Public Relations Officer the full address of the Director of Public Information, and it is possible that this may help.

20. Captain Abel maintains a system of cross-indexing for the photographs in his files; i.e. a photograph of Lt.-Gen. McNaughton inspecting a certain unit would be indexed under his name, under that of the unit, and under the names of any other important officer included, while any special features of the inspection would also be noted. This system is now to be adopted by Captain Jackson at Acton, and I believe that a copy of his index is to be sent to the Record Office, Ottawa.

I have the honour to be

Sir,  
Your obedient servant,

C.P. STACEY,

Major,

Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q.



Secd Original

(copied from Duplicate to  
replace Original lost by  
enemy action).

S E C R E T.

Addendum to Report No.2,  
dated 7 Jan 41.

10 Mar 41.

Work of the Public Relations Officer  
C. M. H. Q.

The Director,  
Historical Section,  
General Staff,  
National Defence Headquarters,  
Ottawa, Canada.

1. The following should be appended to my Report No.2,  
with reference to paras. 5 and 6.
2. Captain ABEL at first performed the duties of Public  
Relations Officer as a civilian. On 16 Mar 40, however,  
A.G.Cable 456 authorized his appointment as Lieutenant with  
acting rank of Captain, C.A.S.F., with the grading of Staff  
Captain whilst employed as Public Relations Officer. His  
military rank was dated from the day of his original appoint-  
ment (25 Jan 40). (See Supplement to Canadian Active Ser-  
vice Force (Overseas) Routine Orders, No.60, 10 April 40).

C. P. STACEY,  
Major,  
Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q.