

Hugh Keenleyside

1898 - 1992

Hugh Keenleyside, one of Canada's first diplomats and the United Nations' first top aid administrator, was born in Toronto but grew up in British Columbia. He served with the 2nd Canadian Tank Battalion in World War I, completed his education at the University of British Columbia and Clark University in Massachusetts, and then taught history at UBC.

Hugh Keenleyside's public career began in 1928 when he joined the fledgling Department of External Affairs. He was one of only two candidates to be accepted out of the 256 applicants who wrote the first examinations ever held by the



Department. (The other successful candidate was a young Lester Pearson.) Almost immediately, in 1929, he was sent off to open the first Canadian mission in Japan, where he remained until 1936. Appointed Assistant Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs in 1941, he served as Canada's Ambassador to Mexico (1944-7) before being tapped for the very different role of Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources. The post

was combined with the role of Commissioner of the Northwest Territories.

From 1950 to 1958, Dr. Keenleyside served as director-general of the UN Technical Assistance Administration, which later merged with the Special Projects Fund to become the UN Development Programme. He traveled widely, from Bolivia to Yugoslavia and Israel, earning a reputation for energy and foresight during the seminal years of international development. In his memoirs he wrote that he had no illusions about the measure of success from such programs and underlined the need for more radical policies in trade and monetary arrangements. In 1959 he returned home, to head the BC Power Commission (1959-62) and then the BC Hydro and Power Authority (1962-9).

Hugh Keenleyside was also active in several voluntary organizations. During the war years he acted as vice-chairman of the Board of Governors of Carleton University, later serving as a member of the Senate of UBC and as Chancellor of Notre Dame University of Nelson, B.C. He was founder of the Arctic Institute of North America and a Life Fellow of the Asiatic Society of Japan. He was also Associate Commissioner-General of the Vancouver-based UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat) in 1976. In the midst of such a busy public life, he still found time to write several books (including two volumes of memoirs) and to read, practice gourmet cooking and play poker, the three leisure interests he listed in the *International Who's Who*.