



## Foreword

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# Foreword

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Since the stirring of world events of the last few years, it has become a commonplace to say that international affairs have ceased to be the sole preserve of foreign offices and specially trained diplomats, and have become not only the concern but the responsibility of the people of the world, and most directly of the people of the democracies. Public opinion in democratic procedure finds its way inevitably and powerfully into the conduct of foreign affairs, however closely foreign policy may be handled in practice through expert and departmental personnel. Since war has become total, the conditions and influences which lead to its making and unmaking have passed forever from the narrow circles of the world's chancelleries, and we are seeing day by day the growing impact of public opinion upon history-making decisions. While this development can be welcomed as marking the end of a period in which sacrifices have been demanded of peoples who had little or no influence or responsibility in the events or decisions leading to such demands, it is impossible to deny the dangers and risks which are inherent in such a situation where the general public is wrongly or inadequately informed. Granted even that the democratic proposition that the instincts of the people will, on an average, be sounder than the instincts of an absolute ruler or oligarchy, it still remains true that a sound judgment requires adequate and reliable data as well as goodwill and noble intentions. The problem, therefore, of the world's progress in international amity and co-operation is not only one of administrative machinery and of vision in high places, but demands that we tread the long hard road of public education to fit the common man for his new and terrifying responsibilities. None of us can avoid making judgments on current international affairs, nor, indeed, can we evade exerting our influence through our governmental representative. The temptation to assume this responsibility lightly and to regard international affairs as capable of slick and snap judgments, is very strong. If we are to make the leadership of the democracies effective, and to arm our governments with adequate support for wise and noble policies, it is important that we recognise that international affairs are enormously

involved and require more than passing thought for adequate judgment.

It is to aid this objective that the Institute of International Affairs was originally brought into being, when it became apparent after the peace negotiations of 1919-1920 that much more public appreciation of world issues was required before ever real progress could be made. We are now in a similar and even more urgent position than at that period. The well-being or destruction of civilisation rests precariously upon the ebb and flow of opinion and attitude among peoples torn with passion and prejudice, and with very ill-equipped knowledge. No nation is exempt from this criticism and our situation will continue to be precarious until the sympathetic and serious study on a world scale of human relationships—political, social and economic—has become the constant concern of a much wider proportion of the world's peoples than is at present the case.

It is for this purpose, as well as to serve its own membership, that the Commonwealth Council of the Australian Institute of International Affairs has decided to launch this journal. The Institute, it is true, is by nature a learned society, but that does not mean that it aims only to further the information of its members for the purpose of satisfying the curiosity and interest of an academic and dilettante group within the community. The day is long past when the issues covered by the Institute are matters of intellectual and group concern only. The Institute is designed to leave its mark to some good purpose on the actual turn of events. It does so not by espousing any policy—indeed, it is strictly prevented by its constitution from endorsing or propagating any point of view. It does aim, however, to strike firmly at the heart of the problem by setting up means whereby research into international issues may be carried out and information of a factual nature may be disseminated, and also to act as a forum wherein those competent not only to give information but to express views may do so without any limitation and without unwanted publicity. In pursuance of this object, the Institute has felt that it would be of great value not only to our members but to the general public if some of the contributions made through the Institute could be incorporated in a quarterly journal, rather than confined to Institute meetings or to occasional pamphlets. Hitherto we have been the recipients of such journals from overseas—notably "International Affairs," the journal of the Royal Institute, and "International Journal," the journal of the Canadian Institute. The time has come, we feel, for a similar activity and contribution on our part. Much excellent material of engrossing interest to our members and the general public is available, both

from our own members and from outside sources, and there will be no dearth of interest and profit in "The Australian Outlook." The Council feels, too, that this journal will act as a unifying influence among our widely separated branches, giving us a cohesion which is difficult to achieve by other means. I commend the journal to all our members and to anyone and everyone who feels his or her responsibility in the stirring decisions which will be before us for many years.

Australia's influence is, and must be, more than commensurate with the size of her population, and it is urgent that that influence should be wisely and nobly exerted.