Cordell Hull Biography

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Biography

Cordell Hull (1871-1955) was an American congressman, secretary of state, and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1945.

Cordell Hull was born on Oct. 2, 1871, in Pickett County, Tenn. He attended normal school at Bowling Green, Ky., and had a year at the National Normal University at Lebanon, Ohio. He then enrolled in the Cumberland Law School at Lebanon, Tenn., completing a 10-month course in 5 months.

Hull was elected to the Tennessee Legislature at the age of 21, and in 1903 he was appointed to fill an unexpired term as judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit of the States. In 1906 he was elected to the House of Representatives, where he served, with one interruption, until 1931. In 1930, elected to the U.S. Senate, he took special interest in the tariff, consistently advocating freer trade relations for the United States. He authored the income tax law of 1913 and several subsequent tax laws. He was a devoted supporter of Woodrow Wilson and of the League of Nations.

In 1933 President Franklin Roosevelt appointed Hull secretary of state, and Hull served in this office longer than any other incumbent--until 1944. During Roosevelt's first two administrations, Hull's great contribution was his development of the good-neighbor policy, involving the establishment of more cordial relations with Latin America. In 1933, at the conference of Montevideo (Uruguay), he signed a protocol declaring intervention in the affairs of the independent states of the New World illegal; this was strengthened by a new declaration at the Conference of Buenos Aires in 1937. Hull fought vigorously and successfully for freer trade relationships, lower tariff duties, and reciprocal trade arrangements. The cooperation of the Latin American republics during World War II was largely due to his influence.

Hull conducted the negotiations in the developing crisis with Japan in the late 1930s and early 1940s. He took a firm stand against Japanese imperialism, while seeking to avoid actual armed conflict. During World War II Hull's role was less significant, however, for Roosevelt leaned on other advisers. Hull did, however, visit Moscow in 1943, where he won Premier Stalin's assent to the projected United Nations. Hull worked vigorously for the realization of the United Nations, though he resigned from the State Department in late 1944, partly because of failing health. In 1945 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Hull died at Bethesda Naval Hospital on July 23, 1955.