

Balance Sheet

Toward the close of Sir Joseph Pope's career he might look back and ask how far his aspirations had been realized.

His aspirations, it is apparent, were limited. He envisaged the Department over which he came to direct as an administrative bureau or department in the domestic structure of government. He did not conceive it as a great policy-making department of State, like the Foreign Office in Great Britain, or as the hub of a widespread independent diplomatic service abroad; he still belonged to his era's prevailing school of thought that relied on the Imperial Government to conduct the foreign affairs of the Dominions. He had little if any notion of changing the constitutional system of the Empire, in which the Colonial Office and the Governor-General were integral and essential cogs. Indeed, in his declining years he was unable even to realize that the old trusted system had already begun to change, from 1920 onwards, largely under the influence of Sir Robert Borden; he wrote in a private letter to Senator Sir George Foster in 1923: "I am one of those who do not see in what way Canada's international status has varied in the last half-century." Pope had no desires or aims in these directions, when he promoted the idea of a separate Department of External Affairs.