

host of new problems, including the control of enemy and neutral aliens in Canada, the protection of Canadians in war zones, and questions of censorship and intelligence. The Department also played an important role in shaping policy on economic warfare and was deeply involved in monitoring contraband, overseeing trade in strategic goods, and supervising enemy ships in Canadian ports.

Fifteen additional officers, five of whom were francophone, were recruited in 1940–41 to handle these new priorities. Clerical staff increased more than fivefold. Unfortunately, the Department's rudimentary administrative structure failed to keep up and most work still flowed through the under-secretary's office. Overworked, Skelton suffered a heart attack and died at the wheel of his car in January 1941. "There is no question," King wrote in his diary, "that so far as I am personally concerned, it is the most serious loss thus far sustained in my public life and work."

Skelton's successor as under-secretary was Norman Robertson, who mirrored his mentor's strengths and weaknesses: a first-rate policy adviser, he was a poor administrator. When Pearson returned to the Department from London in 1941, he found it "a hive of unorganized activity."

Other officers, however, were more administratively minded. Both Hume Wrong and Hugh Keenleyside presented plans to reorganize the Department into an arm of modern government, capable of aligning its activities to address the country's new wartime priorities. Open to change, Robertson presided over a reorganization of the Department, with divisions based on geographic or functional specialty and a chain of command making possible the delegation of authority from above.



²⁸ The war led to a national labour shortage, forcing the Department to hire qualified women to do the work of junior officers. Women, however, remained ineligible to become foreign-service officers until 1947. Shown here is Agnes McCloskey (foreground) in the early 1940s. (Source: Yousof Karsh, Library and Archives Canada, PA-187411)

²⁹ H.L. Keenleyside (left), appointed Canadian ambassador to Mexico in 1944, is greeted by Mexican President Miguel Alemán. (Source: Library and Archives Canada, C-049402)