

legation was opened in Tokyo. Although the missions abroad were headed by political appointees, Skelton set about creating a modern foreign service based on merit.

From 1927, recruits entered the Department—with occasional exceptions—on the basis of competitive examination. Skelton wanted, and obtained, well-qualified officers with postgraduate degrees who could immediately undertake important duties. Among those who entered the Department in the late 1920s were such future luminaries as Lester Pearson, Norman Robertson, and Hugh Keenleyside.

By 1930, the Department's officer staff at home and abroad numbered 16, of whom a third were francophone, although the working language of the Department, like that of the civil service generally, was English. Too small to afford specialists, the Department favoured generalists, a preference that it was to sustain for many years. King was pleased with what he now considered "the most conspicuous and in some respects the most important department of government."



¹⁴ The Canadian delegation to the 1926 Imperial Conference in London helped secure the right of former British colonies to an independent foreign policy and their own missions abroad. Left to right: Minister of Justice and Attorney General Ernest Lapointe; Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs W.L. Mackenzie King; industrialist Vincent Massey; and Peter Larkin, high commissioner to the United Kingdom. (Source: Library and Archives Canada, C-001690)