

1926, and formally defined in the Statute of Westminster of 1931, were the backdrop of the stage upon which the Department of External Affairs was to develop its increasing role.

On Dr. Skelton's appointment in 1925 as Under-Secretary, he found Pope's very small Department of three officers static and almost rigid; devoid of public or parliamentary interest or even of much Cabinet concern - except for the Prime Minister who also held the External Affairs portfolio and borrowed the Department's staff as assistants to his Office; limited in space in the East Block; dependent on British informational service since Canada had no diplomatic observation posts of its own, outside London, Paris, and Geneva; and with an undeveloped public and parliamentary knowledge of foreign affairs beyond the relations with the United States. In some respects he found, if not a tabula rasa, at least an undeveloped and rather elementary foundation upon which he was called on to erect a more serviceable Department. His few assistants at that time included the long-serving W.H. Walker, the experienced clerks F.H. Baker and J.F. Boyce, Miss Agnes McCloskey as accountant and administrative clerk, and a number of seasoned stenographers. It was a tiny contingent. Mr. Desy, Mr. Beaudry, and Mr. Read soon came as Counsellors to help him.