

of State as head of External Affairs. As Dr. D. D. Skelton says, "Mr. Laurier, profiting by the experience of Mackenzie and of Macdonald, determined not to take charge of a department. That would have meant either, as in Mackenzie's day, the work of policy-shaping and party guiding or, as in Macdonald's day, the work of the department would often go undone. As President of the Council, he would be free to give to all the tasks of the government the general supervision he had planned."<sup>(1)</sup>

In this reference to Laurier's reluctance to take charge of the Department, the explanation seems somewhat ambiguous. It is said that to do so would have meant the work of policy-shaping, or that it would have interfered with his freedom to give general supervision to all the tasks of the government. In actual fact, the work of policy-shaping was largely the responsibility of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet, and as Laurier pointed out in the 1909 debate, he looked to the Department only to collect the necessary "historical" data in order "to be prepared to advise as to the policy to be followed." It is difficult to see how in the light of Laurier's own activities and those of his successors, Sir Robert Borden, Mr. Bennett and Mr. Mackenzie King, "policy-shaping"

---

<sup>(1)</sup> D. D. Skelton. Life and Letters of Sir W. Laurier. ii p. 6.