

Premises

On June 1, 1909, the new Department of External Affairs legally came into existence.

Yet it had no home, no base of operations; and for months had a precarious existence under three different roofs, and finally found "temporary quarters", away from its proper centre, where it remained for nearly five years.

The long and unhappy struggle to obtain proper quarters in the East Block fills the correspondence of the summer of 1909. The failure of the struggle exasperated the Governor General, Earl Grey, disappointed the Prime Minister and Secretary of State, and almost broke Pope's heart with frustration and resentment. The struggle was resumed in 1911 when Sir Robert Borden became Prime Minister; but the Department did not finally find quarters in the East Block, where it necessarily belonged, until 1914. It has retained its main foothold there ever since; but has had to expand some of its Divisions into other buildings as well.

East Block

Pope was an East Block man almost all his professional life. This was, as much as the main building of Parliament, the centre of government, the main "engine-room" of the national administration. It was where several of the principal departments and Ministries had their offices. It was where foreign representatives, upon arrival in Ottawa, made their first contacts with the Secretary of State's Office or the Department of External Affairs. It was where the nation's domestic and external