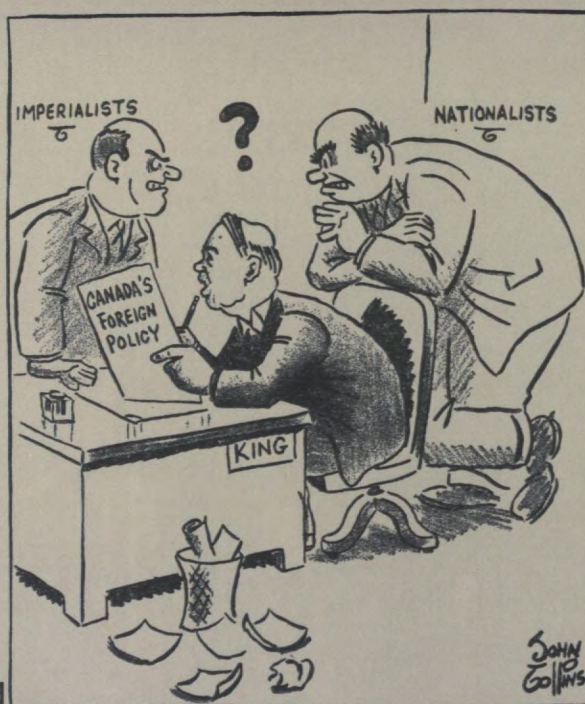


The under-secretary also convinced the Prime Minister to expand the Department in Ottawa during the late 1930s, when eight new officers joined, six of them by competitive examination. Unfortunately, the organization of the Department did not keep pace. All officers in Ottawa continued to report directly to Skelton, whose inability to delegate meant that he was overworked, while junior officers were often idle. "There wasn't all that [much] work," recalled Jack Pickersgill, who joined the Department in 1937. "When I went into External Affairs . . . after I read *The New York Times* through in the morning and decoded a couple of telegrams . . . I wondered what to do next. I gathered that there was a sort of ripening process that went on . . . but you didn't ripen much if you never saw anybody."



Admired for his policy advice, Skelton was castigated as an administrator by observers in Ottawa's small diplomatic community. In 1939, Lester Pearson declared the Department to be, "in one crude phrase . . . in a mess." The onset of war that September would place even greater strains on the Department's inadequate administrative structure and on the under-secretary.



TRYING TO PLEASE BOTH

²² Prime Minister Mackenzie King continued the Bennett policy of expanding trade relations with the United States. This photo shows the Prime Minister (right) and American representative Norman Armour signing the Canada-United States Trade Treaty in Ottawa on June 17, 1939. (Source: Library and Archives Canada, PA-188945)

²³ Prime Minister Mackenzie King faced the threat of war as fascism advanced across Europe and Asia. His cautious foreign policy, designed to avoid divisive debates within Canada, often frustrated the Department, which was anxious to expand Canada's diplomatic reach. (Source: John Collins, *The Gazette* [Montreal], April 24, 1939)