

(G) CHANGES IN THE CANADIAN EXTERNAL SERVICE

1. Dr. O. D. Skelton, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs from 1925 to 1941 passed away as a result of a heart attack on January 28, 1941, in the city of Ottawa. He was buried in St. Marks Cemetery, Pakenham, on January 30. The Prime Minister made the following statement in the House of Commons on February 17:

It would not be fitting that I should conclude this review of Canada's external affairs and of our present international relations without reference to the loss Canada has sustained since the house last met, in the passing of one of the noblest of her sons and one of the greatest of her public servants, whose life was so completely identified with world affairs.

Seventeen years ago, Doctor O. D. Skelton entered the service of Canada at my request. For sixteen years he was Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs. Before he came to Ottawa his teaching had inspired thousands of young Canadians. Throughout his whole life he enriched our national heritage by his scholarship, our national service by his labours, and innumerable lives by the gift of his friendship.

The outbreak of war and the anxieties of the years which immediately preceded it threw new and heavy burdens on the Department of External Affairs. In spite of failing health, the advice of his doctor and the entreaties of his friends, Doctor Skelton insisted on shouldering far more than his full share of them. I have never seen anything which surpassed his devotion to duty as exemplified in his daily work. His death was marked by expressions of sorrow, admiration and affection almost unprecedented. Many notable messages bore witness to his great work, not only for Canada and the British commonwealth but for the cause of international good-will and human understanding the world over.

Only those who have had the closest association with Doctor Skelton during those seventeen years could begin to know what his life meant to the public service of this country. Selfless and self-effacing labour, the highest integrity, and the enlightened use of whatever leisure was granted to him were the measure of his devotion to his native land. Throughout the many tributes that were paid to his work and his memory there ran the theme of his modesty, his kindness and the example he set and created for the young men who grew up with him in the diplomatic service of the department of which he was the permanent head. It is impossible for me to express in words what I owe to his wisdom, his experience, his counsel and his faithful friendship.

It is a matter of common knowledge that Mr. Bennett, who knew and appreciated the eminent virtues of this great public servant, offered him a knighthood, which Doctor Skelton felt obliged to decline. I wished to submit his name to the representative of the King for a privy councillorship, not as an honour or reward but as a sworn relationship which I deemed