

Dr. Skelton, in 1922, while he was still at Queen's University, told the Canadian Club of Toronto that Parliament should take a more positive role than it had been doing in matters concerning foreign policy. He said:

Our parliament has not had much need or much training in the discussion of foreign affairs in the sense of foreign affairs in which the centre of gravity lies across the ocean. Some may say it is out of the question that our parliament should discuss with intelligence matters of European politics. Well, that is true. We can never probably bring the same consideration to bear on matters affecting Poland for instance as we can on affairs relating to the United States. But the broader line should be stated that more interest should be exercised than before the war. If there is any question of foreign policy upon which our Canadian parliament is not or cannot be made competent to discuss, that is a question, I think, on which no parliament should bind us. If parliament does not know enough about a problem to discuss it, it does not know enough about it to sign an agreement concerning it. It is a safe practice in politics as in business not to sign any notes the terms of which you cannot read. In some way then, possibly by the formation of foreign affairs committees, by discussions in the House on the results of conferences in which Canadians participated, whether at Geneva, Washington or London, our parliament will have to take a more systematic, more responsible interest. . . .

It is not merely with parliament that that duty rests; it rests on every individual; if foreign policy is not to go the way in English-speaking countries that it is in many continental countries, if our interest is to be intelligent, if real responsibility is to develop, then private citizens must do more in the way of study, in the way of discussion of the broader issues. (1)

Nevertheless, there were some signs of an awakening consciousness of foreign problems, which, as the recent war had shown, might have unimagined

(1) O.D. Skelton: "Canada and Foreign Policy", January 30, 1922, Addresses: Canadian Club of Toronto, 1921-22, p.153.