

INTRODUCTION

On the eve of the Second World War, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, O. D. Skelton, sent a personal memorandum to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, W. L. Mackenzie King, in which he concluded that "the first casualty in this war has been Canada's claim to independent control of her own destinies. In spite of a quarter century of proclamation and achievement of equal and independent status, we have thus far been relegated to the role of a Crown Colony." Skelton was not alone in his assessment of Canada's position. One of his senior colleagues in the Department of External Affairs, Loring C. Christie, had concluded soon after Munich in 1938, that "there could be no separate Canadian foreign policy in matters of peace or war"; that Canada was one of a "new species of the dependent state known as the 'part-sovereign state'" for which the metropolitan state, Britain, exercised the "full-sovereign function".

The standard, liberal-academic interpretation of Canadian constitutional development holds that the separate Canadian declaration of war against Germany on September 10, 1939 was but the final proof that Canadian sovereignty had been fully realized with the passing of the Statute of Westminster in 1931. Skelton and Christie, practitioners as opposed to theorists, professed to find the opposite.

In Volume Six of *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, January 1, 1936 to September 10, 1939, the policies that allowed these conclusions are traced. The period is one of international crises. The latter stages of the Ethiopian crisis and the failure of collective security through the League of Nations; the reoccupation of the Rhineland; the Spanish Civil War; the Sino-Japanese War; the annexation of Austria; the Sudetenland crisis and Munich; the occupation of Prague and the final dismemberment of Czechoslovakia; Danzig and the Polish crisis; and, finally, the outbreak of the Second World War: these provide the test of Canadian high policy and, it would appear, of Canadian sovereignty. If Christie and Skelton were right, and Canadian foreign policy was ultimately formulated by the British government with the Canadian government controlling only lesser policy areas and if, as Skelton implied, Canada was an unwilling partner in this relationship, then our subject is that of Canada, the still emergent nation-state. If, however, the documents reveal that the Anglo-Canadian relationship fitted a general pattern of great power-small power relations, then we must look