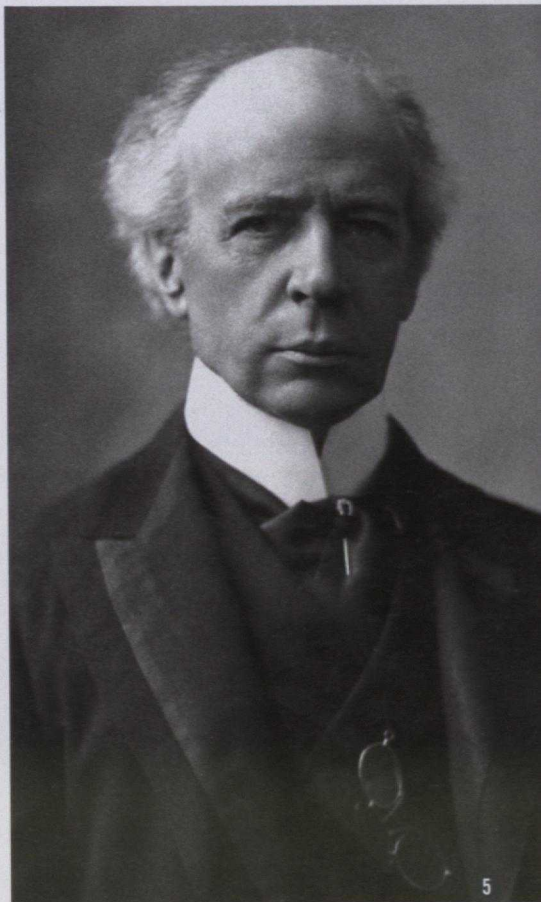


request copies from the British. Embarrassed by this incident, Pope became an advocate of a separate department under the prime minister that would coordinate what he termed “the external affairs of the Dominion.”

Pope soon gained powerful allies. Both Governor General Earl Grey and the British ambassador in Washington, James Bryce, were appalled by the existing situation. Bryce was particularly anxious to clear up a backlog of Canadian–American cross-border issues, which occupied three-quarters of his embassy’s time. Canada, he felt, badly needed “a sort of Foreign Office” to handle such issues. Grey agreed, observing that such a department would make Canada “prompt and satisfactory to deal with, instead of the swollen impossible cork, the extraction of which almost bursts a blood vessel.”

Following the 1908 general election, and after much badgering, the Prime Minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, finally agreed to create the new department. The resulting legislation did not meet with universal approval from its principal proponents. Pope worried that the new department’s prestige would be hurt by placing it under the secretary of state rather than the prime minister. Grey was upset by a clause giving the new department the “conduct” of official communications with other countries. This, he felt, downgraded both the imperial connection and the position of the governor general. The legislation went forward as drafted, however, and, after a perfunctory parliamentary debate, the *External Affairs Act* came into effect on June 1, 1909.



⁵ Sir Wilfrid Laurier, prime minister from 1896 to 1911. (Source: Library and Archives Canada, PA-027977)