

## INTRODUCTION

This, the second volume of *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, deals almost exclusively with the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Volume 1 covered the period from the establishment of the Department of External Affairs in 1909 to 1918. Volume 3 will continue the documents on external affairs from 1918, other than on matters relating to the Peace Conference. The material on the Peace Conference was felt to be sufficiently extensive and of sufficient interest to warrant a separate volume, even if this meant some overlapping in dates.

As early as January, 1915, the United Kingdom expressly undertook to consult the Dominions about the terms of peace when the time came<sup>1</sup>, but consultation was not then feasible. In 1917, Dominion Prime Ministers were invited "to attend a series of special and continuous meetings of the War Cabinet in order to consider urgent questions affecting the prosecution of the War, the possible conditions on which in agreement with our Allies we could assent to its termination and the problems which will immediately arise".<sup>2</sup> With the addition of Dominion Prime Ministers to its membership, the War Cabinet became known as the Imperial War Cabinet. The first series of meetings of the new Cabinet, however, did not get very far with peace terms beyond generalities. The second series of meetings occurred in the summer of 1918 under the shadow of military reverses and it was only natural that war matters rather than conditions of peace should be the main concern.

As the war drew to a close, peace terms assumed priority. On October 27, 1918, the United Kingdom Prime Minister alerted Dominion Prime Ministers about a possible armistice and, if this occurred, about inter-allied meetings in London preliminary to a peace conference. He advised Dominion Prime Ministers that they should be ready to proceed to Europe without delay, if the proposed armistice were accepted by the Germans, "in order to participate in the deliberations to determine the line to be taken at the conferences by the British Delegates".<sup>3</sup> Sir Robert Borden replied promptly that preparations were being made as suggested. This was followed up next day by a telegram setting forth officially for the first time a request for represen-

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<sup>1</sup>Vol. 1, Document 413.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, Document 465.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, Document 364.