

that this would widen the area in which such confidential documents would circulate, and might allow greater opportunities for leakages or breaches of confidence. Laurier, defending the proposal of the new department, expressed rather unusually candid explanations on this point.

The question of secrecy falls into three parts: secrecy of despatches and letters to the Governor General, not shown to even the Prime Minister; secrecy of despatches shared by the Governor General and the Prime Minister, but not shown to the Cabinet; and the secrecy of documents known to the Cabinet but not to be made known outside.

If there be any surprise that despatches from the Colonial Office to the Governor General might, at his discretion, be withheld from the Prime Minister or Cabinet, or privately shown to the Prime Minister without release to the other members of the Cabinet or Privy Council, one may find the roots of this in pre-Confederation history, some relics of which lingered in the later conduct of government in Canada. Professor W.M. Whitelaw, (1), with documented examples, has pointed out that: "Whether the Executive Council has the right to inspect despatches received by the Governor or to supervise those which he sent constituted a frequent ground for dispute. Governors with unanimity resisted the claims of their executive in both these regards, and the Colonial Office gave them an ample support. All admitted that, unless there were special reasons

(1) W.M. Whitelaw: "Responsible Government and the Irresponsible Governors": Canadian Historical Review. Dec. 1932. pp.382-3.