

30. *Colonial Secretary to Governor General*

PARAPHRASE OF TELEGRAM

London, October 26, 1917

SECRET. My private telegram October 24th. Canadian Commissioner. In a matter of such importance it is essential that there should be no misunderstanding as to what is proposed and on reflection I think there may possibly be misapprehension on both sides due to difficulty of discussion by telegraph. On the one hand I read Prime Minister's proposal in your telegram October 19th¹ for a Canadian representative at Washington, with a recognized diplomatic status, but not attached to British Embassy, as meaning that such representative would be both technically and in practice independent of Embassy. But any political unit can only have one Embassy, however it may be composed, at a foreign capital and if this were the correct meaning of the Prime Minister's proposal it seemed to me to be incompatible with the unity of the British Empire in its relations with a foreign State. If such action were taken in respect of Canada it would almost certainly be followed in regard to other Dominions and resultant position would be I think equivalent to a break-up of the Empire as at present constituted. I am convinced that Borden would scout any action likely to produce such a result and I think it quite possible that he has misunderstood the word "attached" in my telegram October 16th and on the supposition that I contemplated putting the Commissioner in the position of an ordinary "Attaché", was indicating the objections to that course. That was not at all the idea of the Cabinet here. They recognize, as I have long done, that it is desirable that Canada should have a representative at Washington who could settle matters of local interest with the United States Government, and their only point was that he should be regarded as part of His Majesty's (Embassy) thereby preserving Empire unity in a foreign State. To arrange this consistently with giving a marked status to Commissioner should not be difficult, and it occurs to me that this could best be settled by personal conference with our Ambassador if he could find time to visit Ottawa. I would try to arrange accordingly if this commends itself to Borden.

If however the above does not meet Borden's views I should be greatly obliged if he would telegraph an exact statement of what he proposes both as to the status of his representative and the mode of accrediting him to Government of United States. Pending reply I will defer a further reference to the Cabinet as until they have full information before them they cannot give proper consideration to the matter.

Please communicate this telegram to Sir Robert.

LONG

¹ Reference is presumably to Document 28.