

22. *Acting High Commissioner to Prime Minister*

CONFIDENTIAL

My dear Borden,

London, August 15, 1914

In view of this terrible war and the fact that it is likely to delay for some time my departure from here I think it best to try and put down a few things in writing regarding this office and the position of High Commissioner.¹ When I left home at your request it was for the purpose of spending a few months here, to try and administer the office in the meantime and in that way to get an insight into conditions here so that on my return I might report to you regarding same. I should much prefer to have done this verbally and it would take far too long at the present juncture to go into such a big question in detail in a letter, as we are busy here every day for long hours. Then the problems and conditions occasioned by this war dwarf all our other ordinary matters and I would not raise the question at the moment at all except that you are having a session of parliament.

I find that the relations of the High Commissioner's office to the branches of the various departments here have altered very much of late years. I understand that in Sir Charles Tupper's time, and in fact he tells me so himself, this office exercised real control over every civil servant and branch of the service in Europe and really represented Canada in all ways, great and small. This condition of affairs seems to have altered very much during the last eighteen years until the connection of the various branches of the service with this office varies very much and in some cases has become almost nominal. I do not know that I could give a thorough explanation of how this has happened nor do I think it is necessary for me to try and do so at this time. You will readily realize that this situation is not conducive to good business and often produces overlapping and is very awkward, as for instance if someone enquires for information from this office regarding some purchase or transaction which has been going on in one of the branches and of which this office has to acknowledge that it is entirely ignorant.

The Emigration branch is the largest one in Great Britain and it is managed under instructions from Ottawa. Copies of all important letters are sent to this office but for some years now no acts of control seem to have been exercised from here although such work comes definitely under the High Commissioner by Act of Parliament. The cheques for payment of the emigration work are issued from this office without any control over

¹ The Act of 1880 appointing a "Resident Representative Agent for Canada in the United Kingdom", to be called "The High Commissioner for Canada", laid down as the duty of the officer appointed:

- (1) To act as representative and resident Agent of the Dominion in the United Kingdom, and in that capacity to execute such powers and to perform such duties as may from time to time be conferred upon and assigned to him by the Governor in Council;
- (2) To take charge, supervision and control of the Immigration offices and agencies in the United Kingdom, under the Minister of Agriculture;
- (3) To carry out such instructions as he may from time to time receive from the Governor in Council respecting the commercial, financial and general interests of the Dominion in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. (*Statutes of Canada*, 43 Vict., C. 11, 1880).