

126. *Le Premier ministre au premier ministre du Royaume-Uni*

SECRET

Dear Mr. Lloyd George,

Paris, May 2, 1919

First. With regard to the interpretation of the League of Nations Covenant, so far as it affects the representation of the Dominions, Lord Robert Cecil, General Smuts and Mr. Hurst, all agree that under the Covenant as it has been adopted, the representatives of the Dominions are eligible under Article IV for election by the Assembly to the Council of the League. On the other hand, two of my colleagues, Mr. Doherty, the Minister of Justice, and Mr. Sifton, entertain the opposite view. The question is doubtless arguable; but as it will not be determined upon a purely technical or narrow construction I am inclined to disagree with my colleagues. Yesterday afternoon at the Quai d'Orsay I took occasion to speak to President Wilson on the subject, and he entirely agreed with the view that representatives of the Dominions are so eligible. I think it important that this understanding should be brought up in some way and confirmed by President Wilson and the first delegates of the other Great Powers, either in the course of the conversations in the Council of Four or otherwise.

Second. The above question is quite distinct from although related to the difficulty with respect to the Labour Convention upon which I wrote you fully a few days ago. This difficulty I also discussed yesterday at the Quai d'Orsay with President Wilson and I found him quite sympathetic. So far as Canada is concerned he would have no difficulty whatever; but he explained that there was considerable difficulty with respect to some other Dominions and especially India. In reply I told him that we could not ask to be placed in a different position from them. As our position has been conceded (in the view above indicated) with respect to the League of Nations, there is a far weightier reason why it should apply also to the Labour Convention having regard to three principal considerations; (a) the essential and striking differences in labour conditions, (b) our great industrial development, and (c) the larger representation of the Governing Body under the Labour Convention (twenty-four) as compared with that on the League of Nations Council (nine).

Unless the offending paragraph in the Labour Convention is suppressed I shall be obliged to make a public reservation when the Peace Treaty is presented to the Plenary Conference. The motion which I proposed and which was unanimously accepted at the second last Plenary Conference affords ample ground, in my judgment, for its suppression. A direction from the Council of Four to the Drafting Committee would effect its suppression.

Yours faithfully,

[R. L. BORDEN]