

The suggestion made at that time for revision of the title was that the King who was acceding to the throne, King Edward VII, might be called, "King of Great Britain and Ireland and of Greater Britain Beyond the Seas".

...This suggestion from London evoked mixed responses from the colonies, as they then were, and alternative proposals were put forward with the result that the words which have become fairly familiar to us were adopted, not by unanimous agreement in the first instance but as a result of messages that passed back and forward between the colonies and London. The title adopted was "King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions Beyond the Seas".

At that time there was a definite expression of opinion on the part of certain colonies, including Canada, which at that time through the Earl of Minto made certain suggestions with regard to the new title by which the name of Canada would be specifically designated. However, these were not followed then, and the title was adopted which remained in force for many years after 1901. It is interesting to note that in the correspondence of 1901 which led to the acceptance of the word "dominions" that word was almost synonymous, although not so subsequently, with the word "colony".

The change that was made at that time is of some significance because of the distinction which developed between the colonies and the self-governing colonies which became dominions. The extent of this distinction between colony and dominion is emphasized further when we consider that prior to 1901, with the exception of the addition in 1876 of the title "Empress of India", the possessions of the Crown outside the British Isles, although included in the settlements of the Crown, received no recognition whatever in the Royal title. It was recognition of the importance of the overseas territories that led to the passing of the Royal Titles Act in 1901, which authorized the Crown to make such additions to the existing title as it saw fit. The title was then proclaimed as we know it, "King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions Beyond the Seas". So it remained for many years. ...

I know that the Government of the day did object to the suggestion that the phrase should be "Greater Britain Beyond the Seas". The Earl of Minto, replying to that suggestion on February 6, 1901... said that his ministers appreciated the inquiry from London, and then he continued:

They entertain some doubt as to the appropriateness of the expression "Greater Britain", which, while convenient colloquially, is perhaps hardly definite or intelligible enough for such a formal purpose. They would therefore suggest for consideration the expediency of retaining the title of King of Great Britain and Ireland and Emperor of India, and adding the words "King of Canada, Australasia, South Africa, and all the British Dominions Beyond the Seas";

In other words, the Canadian Government of that day suggested the inclusion in the King's title, not only of the specific designation of Canada but the specific designation of Australasia and South Africa. The dispatch from the Earl of Minto continued: