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Le ministre des Pays-Bas au Premier ministre
Minister of The Netherlands to Prime Minister

No. 140

Ottawa, January 22, 1943

UNOFFICIAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

In an official note which is being prepared on the subject of the application of P.C. 3959,³⁷ I confine myself to a few facts which illustrate better than any comment the attitude of the Custodian's Office.

Between few countries relations are more amicable than between Canada and the Netherlands. This is due, in no small part, to a spirit of active goodwill, shown by the Government over which you preside, and shown more than ever since the beginning of the misfortunes which befell the Netherlands.

In these harmonious relations, the attitude of the Custodian's office strikes a discordant note. On several occasions it only enabled the Department of External Affairs to answer my notes after a period of many months. I have found, in the replies I received, a tendency on the part of the Department of External Affairs to dissociate itself from the Custodian's point of view, by simply transmitting his statements, without endorsing them.

I have seldom noticed that anything was done to make things go smoothly. On one occasion, after I had received an assurance from the Department of External Affairs, that the assets of a certain company, whose activities were all-important to the Allied war effort, were to be released as being free from enemy influence, the counsel for the custodian still made difficulties on the ground that there had been a few Italian shareholders. On another occasion the Custodian simply assumed, without consulting me, that a certain Netherlands citizen, living in Mexico, might have resided in enemy-occupied territory after the middle of May 1940 and seized his income derived from investments in Canada. It was not until after repeated representations that I succeeded in having them released. Again it was only with considerable trouble that I obtained an assurance to the effect that U.S.A. dollar assets, administered by the Custodian, were not to be converted into Canadian loans. With the exception of assets belonging to so-called administration offices in Amsterdam, when a detailed report was kindly placed at my disposal, Netherlands interests have not very often been able to obtain information, at least so far as I am aware of. It is true I have been told unofficially that the grand total of the assets I am interested in, amounted to about sixty million dollars, but, apart from the administration offices above referred to, I still do not know even roughly what these assets consist of. Neither are the managers, appointed by the Netherlands Government, of Messrs Lippman Rosenthal & Co., allowed to know how they stand

³⁷Décret en Conseil P.C. 3959 du 21 août 1940.

³⁷ Order in Council P.C. 3959 of August 21, 1940.