

Answering a question in the House of Commons in 1909 as to the refusal of consuls to attend the Drawing Room, Sir Wilfrid Laurier observed: "The question . . . is an important one, not perhaps so much on account of the drawing-room as on account of the duties which Consuls-General now discharge in Canada. We have no diplomatic service in Canada, and the consuls general are exercising, by tolerance, some, I shall not say diplomatic powers, but powers very often cognate to such. The question is one which should be settled, and the matter is now engaging the attention of the government."(1) In the following session the position of consuls again came up in the House, and on that occasion Laurier went further than he had before. The position of consuls in Canada, he said, like the status of Canada, could hardly be defined. Although Laurier had "often taken the view that we are now a nation", it was true that "we cannot have under present conditions diplomatic agents amongst us other than the consular agents who are entrusted by their governments with commercial functions. . . . By the force of things these consuls general have become with us semi-diplomatic agents, and many of the consuls have really performed diplomatic duties." Citing the cases of German, Italian, and American consuls as exercising diplomatic functions, Laurier admitted that "all this has been done without authority, and is contrary to the rules that apply among civilized nations."

(1) H. of C. Debates. 1909-10. p.853.