

CHAPTER I

CONDUCT OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Establishment of Department; Commissioner General, France; High Commissioner, United Kingdom; opening of War Mission, Washington; consular questions.

1. *Memorandum from Under-Secretary of State to Civil Service Commissioners*

[Ottawa], May 25, 1907

. . . I refer to the desirableness of establishing a more systematic mode of dealing with what I may term, for want of a better phrase, the *external affairs* of the Dominion.

It is commonly supposed that such matters are now administered by the department of which I am the deputy head, but this is a misapprehension. The Secretary of State is primarily and principally the official mouth-piece of His Excellency the Governor General in respect of *Canadian affairs*; he is the channel of communication between the Dominion Government and those of the Provinces, towards which he occupies somewhat the same relation that the Colonial Secretary does towards the Colonies. All communications which reach the Secretary of State for transmission to England or to a foreign country are forwarded by him to the Governor General with a recommendation that he would be pleased to transmit the same to their destination. All despatches from the Colonial Office are addressed to the Governor General and by His Excellency are sent, for the most part, to the Privy Council where they are referred to the heads of those departments which they particularly concern. Much of this correspondence relates to domestic matters, and with it I have no concern here. Much, however, bears upon what I have called external affairs, that is to say, questions touching our relations with foreign countries, as the Behring Sea Seal question, the Alaska Boundary, the Atlantic Fisheries, International boundaries, and other pending controversies with the United States; or, it may be, with questions whose scope and bearing, though within the empire, extend beyond the bounds of the Dominion; such for example as the difference with Newfoundland over the boundary in Labrador. Let us say the Imperial Government have occasion to communicate with the Government of Canada in respect of any one of these subjects: the Colonial Minister addresses a despatch to the Governor General; that despatch is forwarded by command of His Excellency to the Privy Council,