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*Le secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures
à l'ambassadeur aux États-Unis*

*Secretary of State for External Affairs
to Ambassador in United States*

DESPATCH 1819

Ottawa, December 18, 1944

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to teletype WA-6986 of December 15th concerning the visit of the Right Honourable Richard Law to Washington to discuss relief supplies for the liberated areas of France, Belgium, Holland and Greece. An immediate reply has been sent by teletype. The object of this despatch is to give a more detailed statement of the Canadian position.

2. The importance of this question is fully appreciated. A continued shortage of food, of clothing and of other civilian supplies in areas which have been liberated may have the most serious political consequences. The expectations of the liberated populations have been aroused. They are often conscious of having themselves made heroic efforts to drive out the enemy. They are welcoming troops who are well equipped and well fed. The moment is not one in which it is easy to call upon them to reduce the scale of living which they have been able to maintain during the period of enemy occupation. Countries which are themselves experiencing some degree of war weariness, although they have not actually been invaded, are not in a strong moral position for making such an appeal. This point may be put somewhat differently if we consider the populations of the liberated areas as partners in a general war against Germany and Japan. We may appear to be calling upon them for sacrifices in day-to-day life utterly disproportionate to those which the civilian populations of the United States or Canada are making or are prepared to make.

3. Nothing could be more serious than political disturbances approaching the character of civil war in liberated areas. While these disturbances may often be superficially of a political ideological character, one of the basic conditions which promotes their development is the inability of any Government, whatever its political complexion, to provide for the immediate needs of the people in food and clothing. Once a conflict starts it is extremely difficult to settle and while it is in progress the statements which are made about it, whether true or untrue, may have serious political repercussions within each of the principal Allied countries and may affect their relations with one another. It is hardly necessary to emphasize how serious such developments may be in impeding those peaceful political settlements which are essential if a lasting peace is to be secured which will maintain the values for which such great sacrifices have already been made in the course of the war.

4. This general situation has found expression in two inter-related problems. The first, as indicated in the teletype under reference, concerns transportation; the second concerns physical supplies. The first of these problems has the