

year and twice a year if possible; also to proposal 6 respecting consultation and co-operative action in matters of defence.

The proposal for Ministerial meetings on foreign policy was open to objection on practical and political grounds. Suitable revision would avoid certain of these difficulties; alternatively the government might consider it preferable to refuse approval.

Proposal 6 on defence should be related to the reservation circulated by Mr. St. Laurent following the London meeting. General regional plans for defence to be realistic would have to include other countries as well as nations of the Commonwealth. While the Canadian government were ready and willing to consult with other Commonwealth governments, the text of the proposal could be taken to mean that "the military advisers" of Commonwealth nations would frame joint plans. This would be quite unrealistic and would cut across planning which was now taking place. Proposal 6 would have to be modified substantially or approval should not be given on behalf of Canada.

The other proposals were not intrinsically objectionable but, in the circumstances, it might be advisable for the government to state in general terms the Canadian viewpoint on consultative arrangements, rather than to deal with them textually in a message to other Commonwealth governments.

10. Mr. St. Laurent observed that it was probably inevitable that the proposals would be made public after they had been considered by the various Commonwealth governments.

11. The Cabinet, after considerable discussion, agreed that the Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs prepare for consideration at a meeting the following day a draft message to Commonwealth governments along the following lines:

(a) The Canadian government were fully satisfied with present arrangements for consultation between governments of the Commonwealth; these arrangements had proved in practice to be workable and effective as had been indicated by the Canadian representative at the Prime Ministers' meeting.

(b) The Canadian government did not favour any attempt to formalize these arrangements; such formalization was unlikely to strengthen or improve the present situation which facilitated the exchange of information and consultation on a continuing informal basis at Ministerial and official levels;

001925

RG 2, A5a,
Vol. 2642

Privy Council Office
Bureau du Conseil privé

National Archives of Canada
Archives nationales du Canada