

"Conduct" of External Affairs

chap. 9, page 9

In the letter to Mr. W. H. Walker (~~already quoted~~) written on March 10th, 1909, (while the Commons were debating this measure), and in a memorandum prepared for the Secretary of State on March 25th, 1909, Pope had pointed out that the phraseology of the Bill where it stated that the head of the new Department should "have the conduct of all official communications between the government of Canada and the government of any other country", might be open to misinterpretation. If this meant what it said it was "clearly contrary to the views expressed by the Secretary of State in his speech, and also by the Prime Minister, both stating that it was not proposed to disturb the existing mode of carrying on external correspondence, which is through the Governor-General and the Colonial Office." This wording would seem to indicate that the government of Canada would conduct direct negotiations. Pope's criticism was not acted upon, but very shortly, the Governor General himself proposed that the words "care of all correspondence" be substituted for "conduct of all correspondence". In reply the Government pointed out that this change would "make the Department a mere filing office".

Evidently as soon as the final draft of the Bill was revised by Mr. Aylesworth it had been shown by the Prime Minister to the Governor General who, as we have seen, was keenly interested in the new Department and had since a year before been pressing for legislation establishing it. On reading the draft he had immediately noticed and objected