

this debate in the following brief note:

Laurier

Sir Wilfrid explained that the purpose was three-fold: (a) to allot and distribute despatches; (b) to prepare and keep up from day to day a history of each question to which reference could be made; and (c) to prepare for submission to the Minister or to Council a memorandum or reply to any communication from abroad. An interesting discussion ensued; following Sir Wilfrid, I agreed that these objects were both desirable and necessary but I was at a loss to understand the necessity of a new department in order to achieve them. In the United States there were only nine departments, one of them being the Department of the Secretary of State which dealt with all foreign relations, and I emphasized the fact that the foreign relations of Canada were very limited in comparison to those of that country. I suggested that the present Administration needed better organization rather than more machinery. The new department should be under the direction of the Prime Minister as was the case in Australia. Matters of a confidential character, some of which possibly could not be disclosed to the Cabinet as a whole, should come in the first instance to the Prime Minister. (1)

Secrecy

One of the obvious objections to an additional department was that of the wider distribution than seemed desirable of secret and confidential despatches. This indeed had been in the mind of the Colonial Office authorities as regards the general question of "consultation" or foreign policy information to the overseas territories.

A new Department might necessitate a further enlargement of the groups in the government service who might be called on to see what were supposed to be very secret British despatches. In the debate on the 1909 measure, Sir Robert Borden, the Opposition Leader,

(1) Robert Laird Borden, His Memoirs. ii. p.245.