

131. *Extraits du procès-verbal de la trentième réunion  
de la délégation de l'Empire britannique*<sup>1</sup>

SECRET

May 5, 1919

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1(e) LABOUR CONVENTION: DOMINION REPRESENTATION

Sir Robert Borden referred to the clause in Article 7 of the draft Labour Convention, which rendered Dominion Government delegates ineligible for election to the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization. It would be impossible for Canada to accept this position and he would be obliged to object in the Plenary Session. Canada's rejection of the Labour Convention would mean that immediately after signing the Treaty she would have to give notice of withdrawal from the League of Nations, with which the Labour Convention was linked. President Wilson had expressed his sympathy with Canada's attitude, but the clause still remained. The position was really eminently unfair, since the United States, for instance, could exercise much greater influence on the votes of many South American Republics than Great Britain could exert on the Dominions.

Mr. Barnes said that at the time when the Labour Commission were considering the draft Convention, the Dominions were not eligible for election to the Council of the League of Nations, but he understood that this had been altered; therefore the Dominions ought to be eligible for the Governing Body of the Labour Organization, in pursuance of the resolution of the Plenary Session of the 11th April.

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Sir Robert Borden said that the immediate point at issue concerned the objectionable clause in the Labour Convention. Regarding the League of Nations Covenant, although doubts had been raised, yet he had felt it necessary to accept the opinion of the legal advisers concerned that the Dominions were eligible under Article 4 for election to the Council and, having secured President Wilson's acquiescence to this construction, he had been prepared to agree to the Covenant. At the same time, he had written to Mr. Lloyd George, asking that if possible a definite understanding, confirming this view, should be reached in the conversations among the principal Allied Powers. Regarding the Labour Convention, there could be no doubt whatever. The objectionable clause definitely barred the Dominions from the Governing Body. It would be impossible for him to take such a Convention back to Canada. Canada had led the democracies of the Western Hemisphere in the war and yet, in respect of this Labour Convention which, in view of her industrial importance, was of great concern to her, it was proposed to place her on a lower level than countries such as Liberia, Siam, Nicaragua, Panama, etc.

The resolution of the Plenary Session of the 11th April was ample authority for the elimination of the objectionable clause, but the Drafting Committee would not accept this view.

<sup>1</sup> Représentants canadiens présents: sir Robert Borden, MM. A. L. Sifton et C. J. Doherty.