

26. *Extracts from Minutes of First Meeting
of British Empire Delegation*¹

SECRET

January 13, 1919

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DOMINION AND INDIAN REPRESENTATION AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE

Mr. Lloyd George said that he had suggested the present meeting in order to discuss the question of the representation of the Dominions and of India at the Peace Conference. On the previous day there had been a conversation between the representatives of the British, French, Italian and American Governments regarding procedure. (For record of this meeting see I.C. 104.²) The French proposal had been that the great Powers should each have five representatives and the smaller belligerent Allied Powers three. At the close of the discussion Siam had been eliminated from this category and the representation of these smaller Powers had been reduced to two. Thereupon the question of Dominion representation had been raised. This had led to a very severe contest. President Wilson, and especially Mr. Lansing, had shown opposition to the principle of separate representation for the Dominions. They were, of course, willing that the Dominion case should be represented. The arguments for independent representation had been put by himself with considerable force. In illustration of this he read several passages from the minutes of the Proceedings (I.C. 104). In the end President Wilson had agreed that the Dominions and India should have one representative of each on the same terms as Greece, Roumania and Serbia. The most forcible argument used by President Wilson was that the British Dominions were not on the same footing as Belgium or Serbia, as these last stood alone, whereas the case for any British Dominion would be backed by five delegates of one of the most powerful members of the alliance. Mr. Clemenceau had been very friendly, but it was clear that he had been under the impression that we only desired two representatives for the Dominions and India together. On perceiving that we proposed two for each, he had shown that he was considerably astonished. In conclusion, the feeling he and the Foreign Secretary had had was that the other members of the meeting were anxious to meet the Dominions and India as far as possible, but were reluctant to attribute to the British Empire a very preponderating number of delegates. The effect on the outside world was naturally what was in their minds. Mr. Lloyd George had said that he could not adhere to any conclusions without first consulting the representatives of the Dominions and India. He felt he could assure them that there was no hostility in the minds of any of the Allies, but only hesitation in view of public opinion. The proposal before the meeting, then, was that the Dominions and India should be represented in the same manner

¹Canadian representative present: Sir Robert Borden.

²Mr. Lloyd George refers to the so-called Council of Ten, the minutes of which are printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, Vol. III.*