

20. *Extract from Minutes of Forty-Eighth Meeting
of Imperial War Cabinet*¹

SECRET

December 31, 1918

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REPRESENTATION AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE

The Imperial War Cabinet had before them a telegram from Lord Derby,² dated December 15, 1918 (Paper G.T.—6568), in regard to representation at the Peace Conference. In this telegram it was suggested that the Allied Great Powers should be invited to appoint five plenipotentiaries each; the smaller Allied Powers, three each; the new States recognised as Allies, two each; States in the course of formation, one each; neutral States, one each. The principle on which summonses would be issued might be the following:—Representatives of the Allied Great Powers at all sittings and committees; smaller Allied Powers and new Allied States to have the right to be represented at all sittings at which questions concerning them were to be discussed; possible representation of States in course of formation and Neutral States to attend when summoned by the Great Powers at sittings devoted to discussion of their interests and *desiderata*. It was suggested that the Congress should be composed of two phases—

- (1) The settlement, properly speaking, of the War.
- (2) The eventual organisation of a Society of Nations.

Lord Robert Cecil said that it was proposed in reply to telegraph a general acceptance of the French proposals in the following sense:

Prime Minister has now considered matter. We agree with French proposals on the understanding that they relate merely to issue of invitation to Allied and Friendly Powers, and that number of representatives of smaller Powers to attend sittings of Conference will form subject of subsequent agreement between Great Powers. We assume, of course, that arrangements come to in recent Inter-Allied conversations in London with regard to representation of British Dominions hold good. We think question of division of Conference into two phases should await further discussion.

Mr. Hughes said that, under the French proposals, the Dominions would not be accorded representation equivalent to, say, Sweden. He called particular attention to the second of the two phases proposed, which referred to the eventual organisation of the League of Nations. If the League of Nations were to endure, it would be one of those questions at the Conference which would most vitally concern the Dominions. It was probable that in 25 years the white population of the British Empire overseas would exceed the population of Great Britain. He therefore suggested that, when the Conference discussed this question, the Dominions were entitled to representation equal to that accorded to neutrals. Australia had put and kept more men in the field than Belgium, and deserved as much representation at the Conference.

¹Canadian representatives present: Sir Robert L. Borden and Sir G. E. Foster.

²Secretary of State for War, 1916–1918; Ambassador to France, 1918–1920.