

"Quite frankly, if the Dominions are unwilling to accept an 'assistant' status, or to embody co-operation in some such logical scheme as the above, then I think that the time has arrived to talk in terms of ultimata. I believe that you are very justifiably disgusted and discontented at the unsatisfactory way in which the representation of the British Commonwealth has in practice been arranged at this Conference, but you should not forget that many Englishmen like myself are discontented about it in rather an opposite sense, and are tired of being dragged at the tail of certain Dominions (I do not refer to Canada) in matters contrary to the interest of Great Britain and of the British Commonwealth as a whole, and I am anxious for a 'show-down'. The British Dominions are, if I understand the situation aright, claiming the right to be separate and independent signatories of every treaty, and to have their views voiced both by the British representatives on the Executive Council of the League of Nations and by their own representatives on the Body of Delegates of the League of Nations and at the same time, they are insisting that, in spite of their separate right of signature and their separate representation on the League, the British Government is to do nothing not pleasing to them. The old remark of Lord Bryce's about the Holy Roman Empire just before the French Revolution comes into my mind — that it might have gone doddering on through all the stages of impotent decay, but that God was kind and slew it in the light. I am almost inclined to apply those words to the British Commonwealth at the present moment. I say all this with all the greater emphasis as I am quite sure that no British Minister would have the courage to take any such line. A.J.B.'s words which you quote are characteristic. Perhaps you will let me put my own gloss on them and say that death may be inevitable and therefore right, but it is none the less the wages of sin !

"You know you are the only person at whom I can swear like this, because you do want to get a settlement which is something more than a doubtfully honest makeshift.

"P.S. This letter is too long, I might have summed it up in one phrase. You very justly say in your letter that 'an envoy responsible only to the Government of Canada cannot accurately be described as an assistant to the envoy appointed by another Government'. Quite true, and it is also true that an envoy responsible only to the Government of Canada cannot accurately be described as the envoy of His Britannic Majesty. Those words 'another Government' are equivalent to the word 'finis' at the foot of the history of the British Commonwealth."

The aspect of these letters of greatest interest to the student of Canadian constitutional development is the fact that, despite Percy's protestations to the contrary, the British in 1919 were probably willing to sit down and examine the fundamental bases of the Imperial structure. Certainly, Percy acknowledges that he (and we can reasonably assume that he was not in isolation among influential Englishmen of his day) would rather examine the basic structure of