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SECRET

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

C 271708

Ottawa, August 13, 1947.

Dear Mr. Claxton,

As you will be leaving Ottawa for Canberra in the near future to attend the meeting of representatives of the British Commonwealth of Nations which has been called to discuss the Japanese peace settlement I should like to take this opportunity of making some observations on the Canadian attitude to the conference and the assistance which will be available to you in the form of briefing and personnel.

Since this conference was first projected Canada has consistently maintained the view that its primary purpose should be the free and informal exchange of views on the Japanese peace settlement. The formulation of Canadian policy with respect to the Japanese settlement will be greatly facilitated once we have an appreciation of how other Commonwealth countries are approaching this problem. Furthermore it is hoped that the Canberra discussions will be a good proving ground for ideas on the Japanese settlement. Reports on the meeting should be of great assistance to the Canadian Government in the work of drafting instructions for the Canadian delegation to the Japanese peace conference. It has been our understanding, however, that the Canberra talks should not go beyond an exchange of views. The Canadian attitude in this regard has been well expressed by the Prime Minister in his statement to the House on July 10, when he said: "No decisions will be taken at this Canberra meeting which will affect the freedom of action of the Canadian Government at the Japanese peace conference which is to be held, but it is thought that this preliminary exchange of views will be helpful to all the governments concerned."

It is most important that the other Commonwealth delegations should understand and appreciate our attitude and I trust that you will take an early opportunity when the conference is assembled to indicate our position. For various reasons which you will appreciate the Canadian attitude towards the main issues of the peace settlement must take into account the views of the United States Government. At present we have very little information on this subject. In view of this circumstance Canada must retain its freedom of action in the general international conference when it is held. The Canadian Ambassador in Washington has on two occasions informed high officials of the State Department that so far as Canada is concerned the Canberra conference will result in no commitments on policy and that the Canadian Government will certainly not formulate its position without giving full consideration to the views of the United States Government.

/ The

The Honourable Brooke Claxton,  
Minister of National Defence,  
Ottawa, Canada.