

King brought up question of Governors General ceasing to be the channel of communication between the Dominion Governments and ourselves.¹ His main argument was that present arrangement was not in accordance with modern conception of Governor General as representative of the King, and tended to obscure Governor General's real position and create misunderstanding by suggesting that he was still in some sense the Agent of the British Government. It was not very clear what procedure as regards future channel of communication was contemplated by Mackenzie King but I imagine it would be that of direct communication from the Dominion department dealing with external affairs to Dominions Office for all matters not already dealt with as from Prime Minister to Prime Minister. It was fully recognized that the Governor General should continue to see all communications of importance passing by the new channel and indeed by any other channel e.g. High Commissioners and you would I presume regard it as essential that any such change would have to be accompanied by some definite understanding as to Governor General being kept fully informed on Cabinet business and public affairs generally as His Majesty the King is here.

Mackenzie King further pointed out that apart from question of channel of documentary communication there is really no oral communication today of British Government's views and no representation of British interests as such the Governor General no longer being the recipient of instructions on policy and still less free to regard himself as champion of specifically British interests. His conclusion was that in some Dominions at any rate there might be great practical advantage in the establishment of some office which would be in effect that of High Commissioner for Great Britain.

Position and functions of such a British High Commissioner in a Dominion would of course need very careful thought. He would naturally have under him trade commissioners and any migration representatives we may appoint as well as necessary assistance on general policy questions. Mackenzie King's idea of his main task is that it would be one which by the very circumstances of his position, is difficult if not impossible for Governor General viz., to interpret to the Dominion Government and, where necessary, to press upon them views of Government here, and generally to represent to Dominion public standpoint of Great Britain.

Questions raised were reserved by British representatives on Committee for discussion by Cabinet. This will take place next Wednesday and I should like to know before then what your views would be on first proposal, which received general support except from New Zealand and Newfoundland, and what you think of second which was also received in principle with similar favour though it did not appear that the matter was regarded as one on which early action was contemplated in all cases. This telegram is being sent to all Governors General.

¹ Document 121.