

(i) THE CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN DOMINION GOVERNMENTS AND FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS.

At the Imperial Conference of 1926 it was agreed that in cases other than those where Dominion Ministers were accredited to the heads of foreign States it was very desirable that the existing diplomatic channels should continue to be used, as between the Dominion Governments and foreign Governments, in matters of general and political concern.

While the Conference did not wish to suggest any variation in this practice, they felt that it was of great importance to secure that the machinery of diplomatic communication should be of a sufficiently elastic and flexible character. They appreciated that cases might arise in which, for reasons of urgency, one of His Majesty's Governments in the Dominions might consider it desirable to communicate direct with one of His Majesty's Ambassadors or Ministers appointed on the advice of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom on a matter falling within the category mentioned. In such cases they recommended that the procedure just described should be followed. It would be understood that the communication sent to the Ambassador or Minister would indicate to him that, if practicable, he should, before taking any action, await a telegram from His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, with whom the Dominion Government concerned would simultaneously communicate.

As regards subjects not falling within the category of matters of general and political concern, the Conference felt that it would be to the general advantage if communications passed direct between His Majesty's Governments in the Dominions and the Ambassador or Minister concerned. It was thought that it would be of practical convenience to define, as far as possible, the matters falling within this arrangement; the definition would include such matters as, for example, the negotiation of commercial arrangements affecting exclusively a Dominion Government and a foreign Power, complimentary messages, invitations to non-political conferences, and requests for information of a technical or scientific character. If it appeared hereafter that the definition were not sufficiently exhaustive it could, of course, be added to at any time.

In making the above recommendations it was understood that, in matters of the nature described in the preceding paragraph, cases might also arise in which His Majesty's Governments in the Dominions might find it convenient to adopt appropriate channels of communication other than that of diplomatic representatives.

The Conference were informed that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom were willing to issue the necessary instructions to the Ambassadors and Ministers concerned to proceed in accordance with the above recommendations.

(j) STATUS OF HIGH COMMISSIONERS.

The question of precedence of High Commissioners for the Dominions in London was raised at the Imperial Conference of 1923 by the then Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Mackenzie King). As a result of the discussion at that Conference and subsequent correspondence with the Prime Ministers of the Dominions, a proposal was submitted to, and approved by, the King that the Dominion High Commissioners should be given precedence on ceremonial occasions after any members of the United Kingdom or Dominion Cabinets who might be present on any given occasion, but not in any case given a position superior to that accorded by the United Kingdom Table of Precedence to Secretaries of State.

At the present Conference the question was raised whether it might be possible in any way to improve the status accorded, as a result of the 1923 discussions, to Dominion High Commissioners in London in order to emphasize the importance of their position as the representatives in London of other Governments of His Majesty. The desirability of such action, if it were possible, was generally recognized, more particularly in view of the constitutional position as defined by the Imperial Conference of 1926.