

Memorandum of conversation with
Mr. Norman Robertson, Under Secretary
of State for External Affairs.

During the course of a conversation with Mr. Robertson he told me that Canada would probably not open a Legation in Switzerland but would attach a Canadian Counselor to the British Legation. After all, his main purpose was to deal with the International Red Cross, but apart from other difficulties it was unfair to expect one man to protect a cipher system of communications, etc. He hoped that the ghost of Dr. Skelton would not haunt him for this ~~apparent~~ backsliding in Canada's constitutional development, but he thought that the war, the necessity for speed, and the special circumstances justified this apparently retrogressive step.

Ottawa,

February 19, 1942.

PM/meh

Memorandum of conversation with
Mr. Adelard Godbout, Prime
Minister of Quebec.

While in Quebec today I paid a short courtesy call on Premier Godbout in his office and later had a long talk with him after dinner at Spencerwood.

I asked Mr. Godbout whether he felt that tactically Mr. King was right or wrong in delaying the holding of the plebiscite for several months. Mr. Godbout said that from his point of view Mr. King was unquestionably right. The situation in Quebec was so confused, there were so many cross-currents, that to get a large "yes" vote such as was needed would take a real campaign of education. If the plebiscite were held now he implied that it would result in a "no" vote of large proportions.

There was no doubt that virtually the entire French Canadian population of Quebec was opposed to conscription for overseas service. He thought this was due to several causes: first, to resentment over the way similar conscription was voted and carried out during the last war; secondly, to the prevalence of a belief, which the Government has not yet been able to eradicate, that this is not basically Canada's war but a struggle between British imperialism and German imperialism in Europe and between the United States and Japan in Asia; thirdly, to an inherent anti-British complex due in part to historic memories, in part to faulty text books, and in part to "superior" British

British manners; and, finally, to resentment at the anti-French Canadian campaign carried on by such organs as the Toronto Globe and Mail, Montreal Gazette, etc. All but the last of these are susceptible to treatment by education. But that is a very slow process.

The political situation within the Province is a further complicating factor. For a while it appeared that the Quebec Cabinet might not be a unit in supporting Mr. St. Laurent, the new Minister of Justice, who was contesting the East Quebec riding. In fact, the situation became so acute at one stage that he, Mr. Godbout, had to dash back from Montreal and spend all one night and part of the next day in bringing his Ministers into line. The result was that the Quebec Cabinet was present in the St. Laurent campaign but the effect was considerably weakened by the fact that not one of the French Canadian Federal Cabinet Ministers came down to Quebec.

On the plebiscite, again the division between the Quebec Provincial Government on the one hand and the members of the Federal Parliament from the Province of Quebec on the other hand will be very pronounced. If the members of the Federal Parliament remained a virtual unit in voting for the plebiscite bill when it is brought down his task would be much easier. Irrespective of the final vote in Parliament on the reply to the address to the Throne, he thought that
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more than half of the Federal members would vote against the Government's plebiscite bill and would go out urging their constituents to vote "no" in the plebiscite itself.] Some of these members had great influence. Maxime Raymond was the most intellectual, but two members, named Lacroix, had far-reaching appeal. The leader of the Nationalist Party on the other hand, Mr. Lacombe, had little standing.

There were many elements within the Province that were fishing in troubled waters. Bourassa, although his eloquence was still undimmed, would probably not carry great weight nowadays. In former times he drew his strength from the support of the lower clergy, but this element is no longer behind him. Bouchard was an able and ambitious man who would have considerable influence, but he did not possess the confidence of the responsible elements of the community. He was more fearful of Mr. Chaloult.

[I asked him about the sentiment in the Province vis-a-vis the Vichy Government and General de Gaulle. He said that the active Vichy supporters, although noisier, were very few. Similarly, the active supporters of General de Gaulle were few and, incidentally, less noisy. The great bulk of the French Canadian population was not really deeply interested. Its feelings towards France were platonic, and the thing to remember was that the average French Canadian sympathized

sympathized with one side or another in the French situation more as a reflection of his beliefs and interests in the Province of Quebec than as a barometer of his judgment on the actual issues abroad. Mr. Godbout himself still believed that Petain personally was a sincere and honest patriot, but he feared that he was aging fast and that there was little honesty or patriotism in his colleagues who seemed to be gaining the upper hand.

Mr. Godbout's worries in the Province of Quebec were by no means confined to the present. He was very fearful of the post-war situation, particularly with the prospect of Russia emerging very strong. I said I had been surprised that there had been no outburst against the establishment of Canadian diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia; he said that he, too, had been surprised. In any event, in the confusion and disillusionment of the post-war era when in many places outside Quebec there would probably be near communist manifestations, it might well be that all the discontented elements in Quebec might make common cause and take over the Government. It was to create a certain continuity of normalcy that he had decided after all to make appointments to the upper House and keep it alive. It might not prove much of a dyke but it was at least something. J ↓

He very much hoped that the forthcoming session of the Quebec Parliament would be short. He doubted

if there were any questions that would keep the debate going its usual three or four months. Duplessis was so ill that it was questionable whether he would ever make a comeback. His No. 2, Mr. Gagnon, was less extreme and more of a patriot.

After all, I must remember that while the extremists in Quebec were noisy and had a great voting strength, they were probably neither noisier nor proportionately more numerous than were the extremist elements in Ontario. Anyone judging externals would have thought that Meighen would have won his by-election hands down. Actually the Canadian public, even in Toronto, once it had come to realize that the conscription cry was an artificially raised barrier to serve as a cloak for the creation of a National Government and the entrenchment of vested wealth in Ottawa, voted against Mr. Meighen. I would see the same thing in Quebec, namely, that when the great mass of the voters saw the blind alley down which the extreme nationalists were leading them, they would continue to vote soundly. But I should not forget, moreover, that voluntary enlistments in Quebec were at the moment entirely satisfactory and that Quebec's contributions to the war loans were magnificent. But I should equally not forget that the whole Province of Quebec was at one and the same time opposed to conscription for overseas service
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and in favor of the Mackenzie King Government.
Hence all the confusion throughout the Province.]

Quebec,

February 17, 1942.

Memorandum of conversations with
Major General Sir Eugene Fiset,
Lieutenant Governor of Quebec.

Lilla and I spent two days with Sir Eugene and Lady Fiset at Spencerwood during our trip to Quebec. He is quite an influence in the Province, is very close to Godbout and particularly to Mathewson, the Provincial Treasurer. At any rate, he takes personal credit for having helped the present Government to turn its deficit into a surplus.

General Fiset said that he had an all-out showdown with Mr. Mackenzie King when the latter wanted to take Godbout to Ottawa. He had taken the position that Godbout could not be spared from the province for three reasons: first, that he was not yet ripe for the Federal sphere; he had not yet fully built up his position within the province and was not yet universally accepted as a French Canadian leader; secondly, it would take him a year or two to find his feet in Ottawa and his talents could not be spared during these critical times; and, thirdly, there was no possible successor within the province who could hold the situation. Fiset claims that St. Laurent was his candidate.

According to General Fiset, Mr. Godbout is a great man and has done a great work, but he has three defects: (1), which is remediable, is that his English is not yet good enough; (2) he is much too sensitive
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and can not take the hard knocks that must come to a politician; (3) he is a worrier and his wife is even more of a worrier. They must both grow thicker, protective skins.

As to the plebiscite question, General Fiset can not understand how Mr. King should have yielded to the Toronto crowd even as far as he has. He says the average resident of Quebec says to himself: "Is it not strange that within a very few weeks of the death of Mr. Lapointe, Mr. King should be asking a release from his solemn pledges? It shows that he is succumbing to the pressure of Colonel Ralston, Angus Macdonald, Mr. Howe, and others. He is asking for a release from his promise at a time when voluntary enlistments are good and getting better. Ergo, he must be made to feel that the Province is disappointed in his volte-face." Sir Eugene Fiset was sure that the vote in the Province would be "no", though probably by a lesser majority if the plebiscite were held three months hence than if it were held today. He told me that Godbout had strong convictions against conscription for overseas service and that as a leader he must stand up for his convictions. On the other hand, he made a first-rate blunder the other night in Montreal when he brought in the name of Mr. King and tried to hide behind his skirts. It caused Mr. King embarrassment, it did not help
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the situation in Quebec, and has been bitterly regretted by Mr. Godbout ever since. The Cardinal he felt was a great man, but one of his difficulties in controlling an unruly clergy was the fact that he was not "one of the gang". Although French Canadian he was not from Quebec, but from the Province of Ontario.

General Fiset also called my attention to the jealousy between the Montreal end of the Province and the Quebec end. At the moment the Quebec end had more power in the Provincial Government and the Montreal end in the Federal Cabinet (through Mr. Cardin). Unfortunately, there was always a certain amount of sniping going on in Montreal against the Godbout regime. He thought that closer balance between the two elements should be sought, both in the Provincial Cabinet and in the Federal Cabinet.

Ottawa,

February 19, 1942.

PM/meh.

Memorandum of conversation with
His Eminence Cardinal Villeneuve,
Archbishop of Quebec.

I called by appointment on Cardinal Villeneuve while in Quebec. We drove up to the Palace in a driving blizzard and were ushered into a series of rooms which might well have been found in 17th Century Europe. The Cardinal kept me waiting fifteen or twenty minutes and then bustled in, a short man, vigorous and fluent. After the usual greetings and exchange of compliments, he proceeded on what was virtually a monologue. He likened the war to the struggle between good and evil. He expatiated on the impossibility of any race insulting itself from this struggle. He dwelt on the vital importance of national unity, the necessity of even greater sacrifices to achieve the end, etc. Whenever I tried by a judicious question to bring the conversation to a more concrete level, His Eminence would in a few words bring it back on to the plane of general principles.

I am reasonably well trained in putting down in sequence the points of a conversation. I fail to find, in thinking back on my fifteen minutes with Cardinal Villeneuve, other than generalities or truisms expressed with intensity and with conviction, eloquently and energetically. But no more.

Ottawa,

February 19, 1942.

PK/meh

Memorandum of conversation with
Mr. Norman Robertson, Under Secretary
of State for External Affairs.

During the course of a conversation with Mr. Robertson he told me that Mr. Pearson was on his way to Washington to try and clear up the confused and unsatisfactory position of Canada in relation to the war direction boards. He said there was great chagrin here at the way in which Canada had been pushed aside.

I tried to find out where Mr. Robertson assessed the blame for the current state of affairs. He said that in the first instance it arose from a natural desire to keep consultation in the top levels to the lowest possible number. He said, as a realist, he recognized that with all the Dominions, the Chinese, the Dutch, etc., queuing up outside the doors of the highest council an impossible situation would arise. A second factor was Churchill's personal predilection for speaking in the name of the entire Empire and trying to reverse the process of recent years and integrate it more closely. In this he had been ably seconded by the American Service Departments, whose attitude throughout had been that Canada was a nuisance and had much better be treated as a part of Britain. A good deal of the fault lay in Ottawa where the Services never could make up their minds as to just what they wanted. However, leaving questions of strategy aside, Canada was vitally interested in raw materials, of
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of which she was one of the principal suppliers, and certainly on a parity with the U.S. and the U.K. Here, however, Mr. Batt, in the Batt-Baill^{ie}~~ie~~ Board, was again acting as though Canada were merely part of Britain and this could not be let to go by default. As a matter of fact, when General Dill was in Ottawa he was talking in terms of certain "American and U.K.-Canada" boards, but his conversations remained in the exploratory stage and were never implemented. The result is an intolerable situation.

Mr. Robertson hopes that Mike Pearson may come back with some clearer ideas and recommendations. He doubts whether he will deal much with the Americans; as his time is short he may not even be able to see them. For the most part he will be "having it out" with the British.

Ottawa,

February 19, 1942.

PM/meh

Memorandum of conversation with
Mr. Norman Robertson, Under Secretary
of State for External Affairs.

Mr. Robertson asked me if I knew the terms of the bill which would shortly be brought down to implement the tariff recommendations of the Joint Defense Productions Board. He said that he was inclined to think that the Board had builded better than they knew and that the reception in both countries to the recommendation had been so favorable that he hoped we would take the occasion to draft the enabling part of the bill sufficiently broadly to serve as an entering wedge for further mutual concessions in line with the more liberal trade policies laid down in the Atlantic Charter and the draft Lease-Lend Agreement. For instance, take base metals which can be produced at a lower cost in Canada than the United States. Would not both the war situation and the post-war situation be benefited by Canada expanding its marginal production of base metals at least up to the point where costs between Canada and the United States equalized, rather than to subsidize the development of sub-marginal base metal mines in the United States, which would create a new vested interest?

A short while ago he had received a message from John Stirling and Wiseman to the effect that Harry Hawkins' mind was running along these lines but he had not sent any message in reply, partly because
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the status of the Lease-Lend Agreement was not clear, partly because he had not had time to talk through the problem with a number of his colleagues. However, he could not help wondering whether there was not a psychologic situation in both countries from which we should profit. Although the bill was related to war supplies only and limited to the duration of the war, he wondered if authorization could not be included to extend its provisions by trade agreement or otherwise. He thought there had been some thinking along those lines in Washington.

As to the lease-lend bill, Canada had agreed to its being signed by Britain without an accompanying exchange of letters which, as he said, would not so much have protected the Ottawa system as "surrounded it with a dense fog". A telegram confirming Canada's position was being despatched this afternoon.

The main point to remember and it is one which he has iterated and reiterated to me was that there must be some new ground for manoeuvre in reducing yet further the barriers between Canada and the United States.

Ottawa,

February 19, 1942.

PM/meh

Memorandum of conversation with
Mr. Harry Hawkins, Department
of State, Washington.

I telephoned Harry Hawkins and gave him the gist of my talk with Mr. Robertson about the tariff bill. He told me that as it was essential to get a bill through with the least delay possible, and as there were Congressional difficulties to enlarging the scope of the bill as much as Mr. Robertson had indicated, the bill would be closely restricted to war materials during the existence of war. However, I might tell Mr. Robertson privately that there was considerable sympathy in Washington for the point of view he had expressed and the general feeling was that the renewal of the Trade Agreement Act would offer a better basis for creating the "ground of manoeuvre" than the current tariff bill.

Ottawa,

February 19, 1942.

PM/meh

Memorandum of conversation with
Mr. Norman Robertson, Under Secretary
of State for External Affairs,

Mr. Robertson telephoned to tell me that during my absence Commander Quedrue, the Free French Naval representative in Montreal, had requested the Canadian authorities to send a message to Admiral Muselier, then in Newfoundland en route to England, telling him that both the Free French officials in Washington and the Department of State were most anxious to have him come to Washington before returning to London. The only limitation was the hope that the Admiral would not give any interviews whatsoever in the United States.

Before sending on the message Mr. Robertson asked Mr. Hume Wrong to check and see that it accurately represented the State Department's point of view. Mr. Wrong had gotten in touch with Mr. Berle who had told him that the State Department was willing to have Admiral Muselier come to Washington. The signal was accordingly forwarded to Newfoundland but word came back that the Admiral had left St. John's for Gander Lake and would presumably leave by bomber tomorrow for London. In the circumstances Mr. Robertson suggested that I convey this information to Washington and tell them that if they wished to take affirmative steps to get the Admiral to Washington they would have to
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act quickly and directly with the airport at Gander.

I telephoned the foregoing to Mr. Hickerson who said that undoubtedly Mr. Atherton would be telephoning me about this in a very few hours. I said that if I did not hear from Mr. Atherton I would assume that the Department was anxious to let matters follow the line of least resistance. I asked Mr. Hickerson if there were any other developments on our relations with Vichy that he chose to impart but he did not tell me any.

I did not hear further from Mr. Atherton during the day.

Ottawa,

February 19, 1942.

PM/meh

Memorandum of conversation with
Mr. Norman Robertson, Under Secretary
of State for External Affairs.

I took up with Mr. Robertson the question of a further modification, for the duration of the war, of the Rush-Bagot Agreement, and left with him the attached draft of a note which we would be prepared to exchange. Mr. Robertson said that he felt certain there would be no objection on the Canadian side but he would like to discuss with Mr. Read the question of phraseology before giving me a final answer. (See Department's telegram No. 30 of February 24, 5 p.m.)

Ottawa,

February 25, 1942.

PM/meh

DRAFT

Ottawa, Canada, February 25, 1942.

Sir:

May I refer to Dr. Skelton's note of October 30, 1940, and my reply of November 2, 1940, interpreting the Rush-Bagot Agreement in the light of existing conditions and in conformity with the intent of the Agreement. I am now in receipt of instructions from my Government to suggest that in order to permit naval vessels being constructed on the Great Lakes to combat enemy action upon their arrival in the open sea, they be permitted to have their armament placed in complete readiness for action and that all essential tests and trial of machinery and armament, including the submerged operations of submarines and test firing of torpedoes and guns be effected in Great Lakes waters. My Government is in hopes that the Canadian Government will approve the suggestion, it being understood that the proposed procedure is to be effective only for the duration of the present hostilities.

Accept, Sir, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

True copy of the
original signed by

Pierrepont Moffat.

The Right Honorable
The Secretary of State
for External Affairs,
Ottawa.

Memorandum of conversation with
Mr. Norman Robertson, Under Secretary
of State for External Affairs.

In the course of a conversation with Mr. Robertson today I referred to our talk of January 30th about the possibility of preventing the siphoning of labor from Canada to the United States by trying to work out an agreement and handling the problem through joint action. The matter was administratively so difficult that the American Government felt that if in order to carry out its war effort Canada felt it must prevent the exit of Canadian labor, it should assume the responsibility by preventing such labor from leaving Canada through an exit control system.

Mr. Robertson said he was disappointed but not surprised. I told him that we would try and give him figures for the woodsmen, showing when they returned to Canada and in what numbers. Mr. Robertson expressed appreciation, said this would be exceedingly helpful, and that if a comparable situation should develop on the West Coast in connection with shipyard labor, he hoped we could do the same thing.

Ottawa,

February 25, 1942.

PM/meh

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

Memorandum of conversation with
Mr. Norman Robertson, Under Secretary
of State for External Affairs.

In the course of a conversation with Mr. Robertson he told me that the Canadians had just heard from the Argentine Government that 1678 Canadians had been taken prisoner at Hong Kong. This meant that about 300 had been killed.

The prisoners are on the island of Hong Kong and have not been transferred to Japan. The Japanese have refused to allow the Swiss to act as protecting Power in Hong Kong, nor will it allow the Argentines to visit the island, or even the International Red Cross. Very ugly stories are coming through about the treatment of prisoners by the Japanese. Thus far the Canadian Censor has played these down. Several reasons have contributed to this decision: (1) There is a desire to spare families unnecessary distress. (2) There was worry lest there be a flare-up with reprisals against the Japanese in British Columbia. (3) There was a fear that it would not ameliorate the lot of the remaining prisoners. (4) There was worry over its effect on morale in Java, India, etc. (5) There was a hope, albeit a slight one, that most of the reports of bad treatment were incident to the capture of Hong Kong and would not be continued once a routine had been reached.

However, sooner or later some publicity must come out. Canada has been working closely with England to
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evolve a parallel policy, but the only discussion with the United States has been an informal one between the two censorships. I volunteered to find out about the situation in Washington, but Mr. Robertson said that he felt that the matter would probably come to a head before my return.

Ottawa,

February 25, 1942.

PX/meh