RETURN

Of Correspondence between Hon. John Oliver and Rt. Hon. Sir R. L. Borden, Prime Minister of Canada, and other Members of the Provincial and Federal Governments, touching the Matter of a Conference of Provincial Premiers and Members of the Dominion Government held at Ottawa, November 19th to 23rd, 1918.

JOHN OLIVER,
Premier.

Premier's Office,
31st January, 1919.

TELEGRAM FROM HON. JOHN OLIVER TO RT. HON. SIR ROBERT L. BORDEN.

VICTORIA, B.C., September 27th, 1918.

Right Hon. Sir Robert Borden,
Ottawa.

B.C. Government strongly are of opinion that a round-table Conference of Provincial and Dominion Premiers necessary to formulate plans for concerted action in respect to caring for returned and returning Canadian Military Forces and their dependents.

JOHN OLIVER.

TELEGRAMS FROM RT. HON. SIR ROBERT L. BORDEN TO HON. JOHN OLIVER.

OTTAWA, ONT., October 21st, 1918.

Hon. John Oliver,
Premier, Victoria.

Your telegram 27th September has just reached me. I hope to arrange for a Conference before 15th November, at which matters you mention can be taken up.

R. L. BORDEN.

OTTAWA, ONT., October 25th, 1918.

Hon. John Oliver,
Premier, Victoria.

On account of Federal loan campaign it is thought inadvisable to call the proposed Conference of Provincial Premiers before Tuesday, nineteenth November, and it has been summoned for that date. We trust that this slight postponement will not occasion any inconvenience. In view of several important subjects requiring consideration, we have decided to summon the Premiers of all the Provinces for the date mentioned, and formal notice goes out to-day.

R. L. BORDEN.

OTTAWA, ONT., October 26th, 1918.

Hon. John Oliver,
Victoria, B.C.

It is the desire of the Dominion Government to have a Conference with the Provincial Premiers in Ottawa, commencing on Tuesday, November 19th, for the purpose of considering

the problem of soldiers' settlement, the general problem of land settlement, and the request of the Prairie Provinces for the transfer to them of their natural resources. Other subjects for discussion may be proposed. We earnestly request your attendance; Conference should not occupy more than three or four days.

R. L. BORDEN.

MEMO. FOR CONSIDERATION OF CONFERENCE OF DOMINION AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS.

Held at the City of Ottawa, November 19th, 1918.

(Submitted by Hon. John Oliver and Hon. T. D. Pattullo.)

Hon. Frank Carvell,
Chairman.

DEAR SIR,—When the Government of British Columbia received the telegram of the Hon. Sir. Robert Borden, Prime Minister of Canada, extending an invitation to attend this Conference, it was under the impression that any and all subjects which might suggest themselves to the Conference would properly be subject of discussion by the Conference.

Upon the opening of the Conference, practically the first question which urged itself upon the attention of the Conference was the question of the transference to the Prairie Provinces of the unalienated natural resources of those Provinces, which question, it was stated by representatives of the Federal Government, was specifically a matter for the consideration of the Conference.

To the representatives of British Columbia it was clear that the claims of British Columbia for the return of lands formerly conveyed by the Province of British Columbia to the Dominion in aid of the construction of railways, while much the same in principle as the claims of the Prairie Provinces, were of an even stronger character, and a request was made to the Conference that the claims of British Columbia should be considered.

To our surprise it was clearly stated by representatives of the Dominion Government, that, as British Columbia's claim was not specifically upon the list of subjects prepared by the Dominion for consideration by the Conference, therefore the said claim could not be considered at this Conference. This position, however, was modified, and the statement made that if the Conference so desired the case of British Columbia could be considered. Thereupon the Conference did indicate its desire that the claim of British Columbia should be considered.

After some discussion the suggestion by representatives of the Dominion Government, that the representatives of the Provinces should meet apart from the representatives of the Dominion for the purpose of arriving, if possible, at some conclusion which they would be prepared to recommend to the Dominion for acceptance, was acted upon.

During the deliberation of the Provincial representatives the claim of British Columbia was discussed as fully and as freely as were the claims of the Prairie Provinces, and, as far as we could judge from the tenor of the discussion which took place, the claim of British Columbia was favourably considered by the Provincial representatives. Certainly, so far as we are aware, no objections were made to the validity of British Columbia's claim.

As we understood the situation, the claims of all four of the Western Provinces were acceptable to the Provincial representatives. A difference of opinion arose amongst the Provincial representatives as to whether the granting of the claims of the Prairie Provinces would, or would not, entitle the Eastern Provinces to an increased subsidy allowance.

The position of British Columbia on this question is that if the granting of the claims of the Western Provinces creates or causes an inequity of treatment as between any of the Provinces, then the amount of such inequity should be ascertained and adjusted by the Dominion Government.

We were very much discouraged when, upon attempting to place British Columbia's position before the general Conference, the Hon. the Minister of the Interior again raised the objection that, as British Columbia's claim was not upon the list of subjects prepared by the Dominion for consideration, therefore the said claim could not be considered. Should the position taken by the Honourable the Minister of the Interior be upheld by this Conference, we shall certainly feel that we have been very unfairly treated.

We believe that it is the desire of this Conference that the claim of British Columbia be dealt with upon its merits, and at the same time as the claims of the Prairie Provinces are dealt with, and we so request.

If the Dominion Government is not already satisfied of the right and justice of the claim of British Columbia, we hope that we may be given the opportunity to support our claim by reason and evidence much more fully than has been possible during the deliberations of this Conference.

Respectfully submitted.

(Sgd.) JOHN OLIVER,
Prime Minister of British Columbia.

(Sgd.) T. D. PATTULLO,
Minister of Lands, British Columbia.

LETTER TO SIR W. T. WHITE FROM HON. JOHN OLIVER.

December 23rd, 1918.

Sir W. T. White,
Acting-Premier, Ottawa, Ont.

DEAR SIR,—Since returning to British Columbia from the Ottawa Conference the question of caring for the returned soldier has become more acute, and, whilst the Conference undoubtedly did much towards arriving at a better understanding, yet I strongly am impressed with the fact that we have not yet got down to a working basis. As you are aware, none of the decisions of the Conference were recorded in writing, and although the British Columbia delegates came away from the Conference with (to them) a very clear conception of what was agreed upon at the Conference, yet at conferences of this kind, where conclusions are not reduced to writing, there are apt to be differences of conception as to what understanding really was arrived at. If you will refer to my letter of the 14th addressed to the Hon. the Minister of the Interior—a copy of which was forwarded to you—you will see what British Columbia already has done, and, as our Legislature will meet in about a month's time, it is advisable that any possibility of error in preparing any necessary legislation should be removed.

Our conception of the conclusions of the Conference, as far as the same affect British Columbia, are as follows:—

(1.) That the Province would exercise its constitutional powers (to the extent of expropriation if necessary) in making suitable lands available for soldier settlement purposes:

(2.) That the Dominion Government would advance to the Province such moneys as might be necessary to make lands for soldier settlement available:

(3.) That the powers of the Soldier Settlement Board would be enlarged to enable them to purchase lands suitable and necessary for soldier settlement from either private persons or the Crown in the right of the Province:

(4.) That Federal aid to soldier settlers only would be made through the medium of the Soldier Settlement Board:

(5.) That the Federal Government desired that there should be no duplication of effort or administration in respect to soldier land settlement:

(6.) **That the duty of the re-establishment of returned soldiers in civil life pertains to the Federal Government:**

(7.) That the Federal Government desires the assistance and co-operation of the Provincial Governments in the civil re-establishment of returned soldiers in civil life:

(8.) That the Federal Government will designate to the Province the manner and extent of the co-operation desired:

(9.) That the Federal Government is desirous that the Province shall establish, maintain, and operate a Province-wide system of Labour Bureaus, one-half the cost of which will be borne by the Federal Government:

(10.) That the Federal Government will provide vocational training to the extent necessary for the future welfare of those returned soldiers who may be in need of the same:

(11.) That the Federal Government will loan money to the Province for the purpose of providing suitable housing accommodation:

(12.) That the Federal Government will undertake the immediate construction of necessary public works so as to prevent unemployment on any large scale:

(13.) That the Federal Government will advance loans of money to the Province so as to enable the Province to construct necessary public works with a view to preventing any large amount of unemployment.

I would urge that the Province be advised at once of the extent and manner in which Provincial co-operation is desired.

I very strongly am of the opinion that the scale of pensions should be much more liberal than they are at present, and there should be only a small margin of difference as between the private and the officer, and that, whilst a minimum pension should be fixed, the pension actually paid should actually increase in proportion as the cost of living varies above normal.

I also am very strongly of the opinion that the Federal Government should provide for the suitable housing of returned soldiers and their dependents, especially those who are suffering from any degree of disability.

I want to impress upon you in the strongest possible manner that returned soldiers should not be discharged until employment is available for them, and that in each centre of population there should be a house of refuge for returned men out of employment.

I know that there is a feeling of uneasiness existing here as to what may happen should there be any large number of unemployed engaged in demonstration; from the latter to riots and destruction is only a short step.

We constantly are being asked the following questions, and we would like you to advise us thereon:—

(*a.*) Will the Federal Government pay the cost of transporting the soldier settler and his family to the land?

(*b.*) Will the Federal Government make the soldier settler a living allowance for himself and family until he otherwise can become self-supporting?

(*c.*) Will the Federal Government make the returned soldier a living allowance until employment is secured?

(*d.*) **Will the Federal Government assist the returned soldier in—**

Furnishing home;
Live stock for farm;
Tools for his trade;
Relief re mortgages falling due;
Personal equipment;
Professional expenses of students?

(*e.*) For what length of time will the Dominion bear one-half the cost of Labour Bureaus?

Please correct any misconceptions in this letter and reply at an early date.

Yours truly,
JOHN OLIVER.

LETTER FROM SIR W. T. WHITE TO HON. JOHN OLIVER.

OTTAWA, December 31st, 1918.

Hon. John Oliver,
Prime Minister of British Columbia, Victoria, B.C.

DEAR MR. OLIVER,—I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 23rd instant with reference to the subjects discussed at the recent Provincial Conference. I have asked Honourable Mr. Calder, Chairman of the Repatriation Committee of the Cabinet, to write you fully with regard to items numbered 1 to 10 in your communication. He is absent from the Capital for a few days, but will upon his return take the matter up promptly.

With regard to item No. 11, I have already forwarded you a copy of an Order in Council setting out the terms and conditions upon which the Dominion Government will loan money to the several Provincial Governments for the purpose of promoting better housing conditions.

With regard to item No. 12, the Dominion Government has already given attention to the question of continuing essential public works the completion of which was interrupted by the war.

With regard to item No. 13, it does not appear to me, in view of the favourable financial conditions now prevailing, that it will be necessary for the Dominion Government to make loans to any Provincial Government to assist in the construction of necessary Provincial public works. Should it become clearly necessary for a Provincial Government to seek assistance in this regard, we shall be glad, upon request, to take the matter up with them.

I note your remarks as to pensions and the discharge of returned soldiers. You have probably seen by the press the announcement of the Government's policy providing gratuities to discharged members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force which should maintain them until reabsorbed into civil life and occupation.

With kind regards and all good wishes for the New Year, believe me,

Yours faithfully,
W. T. WHITE.

LETTER FROM HON. J. A. CALDER TO HON. JOHN OLIVER.

OTTAWA, ONT., January 8th, 1919.

Hon. John Oliver,
Premier, Victoria, B.C.

DEAR MR. OLIVER,—Your letter of December 23rd, addressed to Sir Thomas White, has been transmitted to me with a request that I should write you fully regarding your statement of the conclusions reached by the Interprovincial Conference recently held at Ottawa, more particularly in connection with the first ten items mentioned in your letter.

As regards the problem of soldier settlement, you have in the main stated correctly the conclusions reached. As it is proposed that privately owned lands should be made available for returned men, each Province should take authority by legislation to secure these lands by expropriation, or otherwise, for the Soldier Settlement Board. It is not contemplated that the power of expropriation will have to be used to any extent. The probabilities are the Soldier Settlement Board in each Province will be able to purchase from private owners such lands as may be required. In all cases where the Board uses Provincial machinery to purchase or acquire land the Federal Government will place at the disposal of the Board such moneys as may be necessary to reimburse the Provinces.

From the discussions held at Ottawa at the time of the Conference it would appear desirable that the powers of the Soldier Settlement Board should be so enlarged as to enable it to deal with every phase of soldier settlement work. It has, therefore, been decided to submit to Parliament the necessary legislation for this purpose. **The feeling here is that but one administrative body should be established. Duplication of machinery would lead only to confusion. The Provinces, therefore, will only be expected to make provision for acquiring privately owned lands, as intimated above.** I am assuming, of course, that a definite understanding has already been reached by the Board with your Province as regards the use of Crown lands for soldier settlement purposes.

With reference to the general question of the repatriation of the returned soldier, I would judge from your statement that you appear to be of the view that the solution of this problem rests entirely at the door of the Federal Government. While the Federal Government recognizes its full responsibility as regards the returned soldier who is physically or mentally incapacitated, the problem of re-establishing in civil life the returned man who is in normal condition is one that requires the combined efforts not only of all the Governments in Canada, but of all the people as well. For the purpose of dealing with one side of this question, the conclusion was reached at the Conference that, so far as employment is concerned, the work should be centred in Labour Bureaus to be established by the Provinces. Some thirty or more of these are now in operation. Doubtless you have obtained through the Minister of Labour full details as to the assistance to be given by the Dominion Government. It has been agreed that Ottawa shall bear one-half the expense entailed in the establishment and maintenance of these offices. As to repatriation work generally, the Dominion Government, through the Repatriation Committee

of the Cabinet, stands prepared to assume responsibility for organizing the nation for the task. The machinery for this purpose has already been set in motion. The co-operation of the Provincial and Municipal Governments, the Patriotic Fund, the Red Cross Society, various friendly societies, churches, and other organizations and bodies is needed and is being secured. Presently we expect to have, from ocean to ocean, an organization that should be able to grapple with the problem and render efficient service.

The Department of Returned Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment, under Sir James Lougheed, has, by Statute, been assigned the task of providing vocational training for returned men, and have been carrying on the work for months past with the co-operation of the Provinces, which have made available their various institutions that are suitable for the purpose. **It is not intended that Provincial Governments should assume any direct responsibility in this field of work.** They can, however, assist materially by permitting the use of Provincial educational and other institutions on terms to be agreed upon.

I am sure you will agree with me that the problem of repatriation that confronts us is, to say the least, a difficult one. What is needed in Canada more than anything else is a clear recognition on the part of our people that the job is one for the nation as a whole. The replacing of three or four hundred thousand soldiers in our civil life is a task that cannot be accomplished by any Government or any set of Governments. Governments can plan, organize, and assist in a large way, but unless our people generally view the problem in the right light and stand prepared to assist in every way possible, I fear there are dangers ahead. The tendency upon the part of many people to shift the entire burden from themselves and place it upon the shoulders of the Government, both Federal and Provincial, is to be deplored. As I have previously stated, Governments can and must assist in a large way, but when you get right down to the final analysis of the problem its real solution will be found to depend upon the whole-hearted, active, and sympathetic support of the Canadian people.

In case there is any further information you desire, I shall be very pleased to furnish same if it is within my power.

Yours very truly,
J. A. CALDER.

LETTER FROM HON. JOHN OLIVER TO HON. J. A. CALDER.

January 17th, 1919.

Hon. J. A. Calder,
Minister of Immigration and Colonization, Ottawa, Ont.

DEAR MR. CALDER,—I write to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 8th inst., regarding the conclusions reached by the Interprovincial Conference at Ottawa. I thank you for the very full statement of your understanding in this matter, as this clears the question and obviates the chance for any misunderstanding.

With best wishes,

Yours truly,
JOHN OLIVER.

VICTORIA, B.C.:
Printed by WILLIAM H. CULLIN, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty,
1919.