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Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

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Patriation of the Canadian Constitution

in box
Thank you for your minute of 28th January. I think that it would indeed be valuable if we could, as you suggest, have an early meeting to talk about the next steps. You will by now have seen the full record of the discussion and I hold strongly to the view I expressed to Mrs Wadds that the gravity of the Parliamentary situation should not be underestimated. I thought it right to convey this in the plainest terms to her, not in order to close any options, but to try to bring greater realism into the Canadian appreciation of what is likely to happen. It is strongly my view that the joint objective of both countries should be to find a solution which will both meet Canada's needs and prove acceptable to Westminster.

A discussion between us will be particularly useful at this stage since I also think it important that the gravity of the situation likely to confront us in Parliament should be fully appreciated. But having said that, I stress that it is my objective all the time to try to improve attitudes in Parliament so as to reduce the difficulty of the Government's task. I think that the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, which gives a more balanced appreciation of the problem than I had expected, may yet prove helpful to us in this respect. At the right moment - perhaps towards the end of February - I believe it would be helpful and

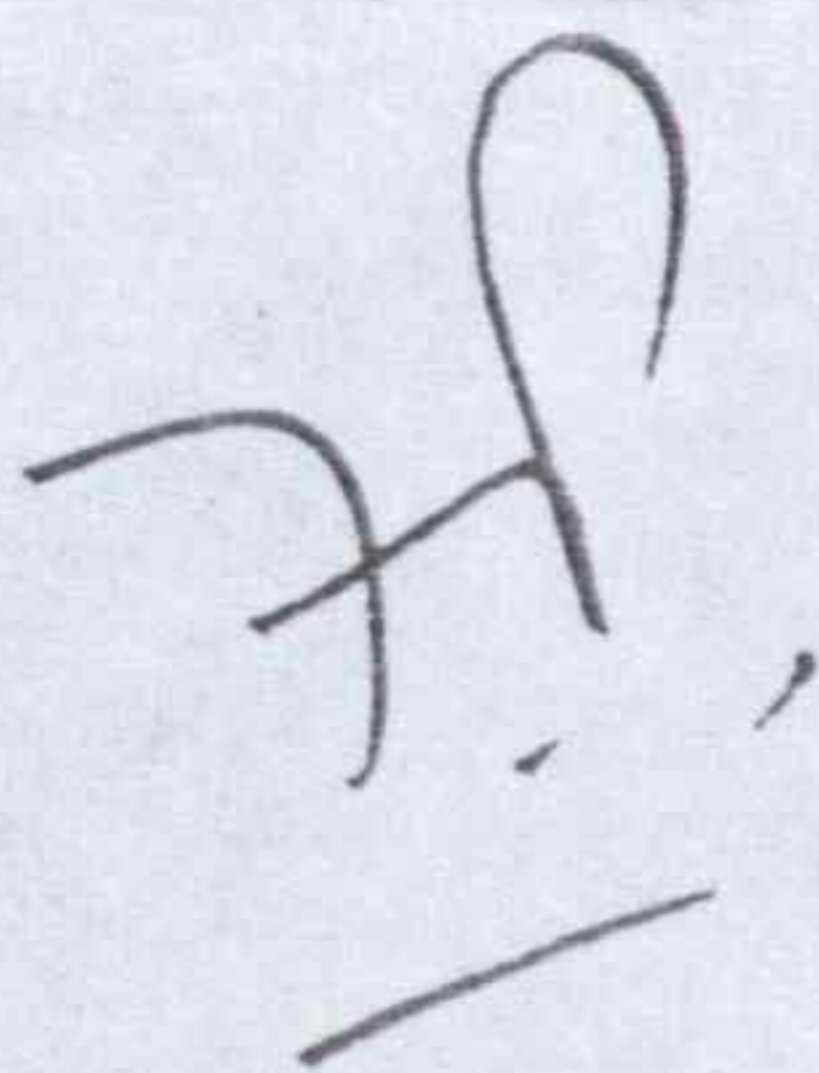
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wise to give the House of Commons an opportunity to debate
the report at a time when there will be no issue before the
House for decision. We need to test the Parliamentary water
before any request is despatched, and this seems the ideal
way to do this. It will, of course, be necessary to judge
the timing of this debate - if that finds favour with colleagues -
in relation to developments in Ottawa.

My office will be in touch with yours about a date for a
meeting.

I am sending a copy of this minute to the Prime Minister.



F.P.

29 January 1981