

CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister

(2)

Ref. A03099

MR. ALEXANDER

MB

Paul - 28/9

Mr. Michael Pitfield, the Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet in Ottawa, was one of the representatives of Canada at last week's meeting of Personal Representatives. In the course of a short discussion with him, he asked me to convey to the Prime Minister his Prime Minister's gratitude for her understanding approach on the question of the patriation of the Canadian Constitution.

2. I made it clear that the Prime Minister stood by what she had said to Mr. Trudeau at their meeting on 25th June. I added, however, that a unilateral request for patriation would present the Prime Minister with some political difficulties. The breakdown of Mr. Trudeau's talks with the provincial Prime Ministers had been reported in the British Press, and there had been some discussion of the possibility of a unilateral request for patriation. The Prime Minister might encounter some objections to unilateral patriation from back-benchers in the House of Commons, particularly if provincial Prime Ministers sought to stir up opinion in Britain. Mr. Pitfield acknowledged this difficulty, but said that a poll had recently been conducted in Canada which showed an overwhelming majority in favour of patriation of the Constitution, even in the western provinces.

3. Mr. Pitfield referred to the visit being made by Canadian Government lawyers to Britain at present. He said that Mr. Trudeau had not made up his mind yet either about content or about timing; but he had it in mind that, before announcing a decision, he would send over a Minister or Ministers to discuss the matter with the British Government. After an announcement Mr. Trudeau might wish to send Mr. Pitfield over for further consultations on the matter.

4. I am sending a copy of this minute to Mr. Walden.

RA

(Robert Armstrong)

29th September, 1980

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