

SUBJECT.



Re ^{MP}
Canada

10 DOWNING STREET

Master set.

From the Principal Private Secretary

8 December 1981

Canadian Constitution

The Prime Minister and the Lord President met this morning to discuss the latest position on the patriation of the Canadian Constitution.

The Prime Minister said that she had had to warn Mr. Trudeau when they had spoken on the telephone last Friday that it was her instinct that it would be unwise to plan on the assumption that Parliament would have completed all the stages of the Canadian Constitution Bill in time for the Queen to visit Canada on 15 February for the celebrations to mark the patriation of the Constitution.

was sure that the secret of getting the Bill through as quickly as possible was to take it at its natural pace. We must remember that the subject of the Canadian Constitution had never been debated in the House of Commons and we really did not know what we should find when the Bill had its second reading. He had in mind Wednesday 20 January for the second reading debate, and he was considering whether to set aside two days for it. If we allowed the second reading debate to go on as long as this, it might help shorten the Committee stage later. He was at present thinking of taking the remaining stages on 27/28 January, though he could not guarantee to complete all the stages in the Commons then. But even if the Commons did complete their consideration of the Bill on 28 January, the Lords would then need a further fortnight. The only way in which the process might possibly be shortened was by introducing a No. 2 Bill

/ in the Lords

in the Lords, but he was not at all sure about the wisdom of this course.

We should explore urgently every possibility of reducing the time needed for the passage of the Bill through both Houses, though she saw the strength of the Lord President's concern that any suggestion of external pressure on the Parliamentary timetable might increase opposition to the Bill and delay its passage. Instead of allocating two days for second reading, we might confine the debate to one day but let it run on until midnight. She would also be grateful if the Lord President could explore with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Chief Whip (Lords) the possibility of introducing a No. 2 Bill in the Lords. He should let her know in the course of the day if he was able to make any progress in this direction.

I am sending copies of this letter to Brian Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Michael Pownall (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office), Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

C.A. WHITMORE

*Passages deleted and closed, 40 years,
under FOI Exemption.*

*(Wayland
20 June 2013*

David Heyhoe, Esq.,
Lord President's Office.

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