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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

*Prime Minister
i.e. 'steady as she goes' which
I am sure is right.*

4 February 1981

And 4/2

Dear Michael,

Meeting between Lord Carrington and Mr Pym at the House
of Lords on Monday, 2 February

Lord Carrington and Mr Pym met at 4.15 pm on Monday 2 February in the House of Lords to discuss the Canadian constitutional issue. Mr Ridley was also present.

During the meeting it was agreed that:

- (i) we were obliged to put a Canadian request for patriation, when received, to Parliament as a government measure. This was in any case the right course;
- (ii) we must, however, prepare a plausible public defence of this position;
- (iii) in this context, we should prepare our reply to the FAC Report as soon as possible, even though we might not wish to put it in final form at once;
- (iv) we should meanwhile try to focus attention, particularly among MPs, on the realities of the situation, notably the importance of our relations with the Canadian Federal Government (as opposed to the Provinces);
- (v) we should not imply to the Canadians or anyone else that we had closed off the possibility of getting the legislation through Parliament, whether this session or next. Possible parliamentary tactics, relating specifically to the current session, were discussed;

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- (vi) Mr Pym would consider the possibility of a preliminary motion which could have the effect of making the Canadian Bill harder to amend in the British Parliament;
- (vii) we should not at this stage propose a preliminary debate in the House of Commons; but we should consult Sir John Ford about likely Canadian reactions to a debate in Parliament prior to receipt of the Canadian proposals.

There was also some discussion of whether Mrs Thatcher should send a message to Mr Trudeau, as Sir John Ford has proposed. I shall be writing to you about this separately.

*Submitted
separately.*

*Yours ever,
Francis Richards*

(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

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