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## ANNEXE

E 2200 London 32/2

*Le Ministre de Suisse à Londres, Ch. R. Paravicini,  
au Secrétaire général de la Société des Nations, E. Drummond*

Copie

London, October 25th 1920

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I spent a few days last week in Switzerland and on the occasion of an audience I had with him, the President of the Confederation, M. Motta, asked me to speak to you, should an opportunity arise, about a question of protocole in connection with the opening of the Assembly of the League.

As you are going straight from Brussels to Geneva, allow me to write to you about it.

M. Motta is a Member of the Swiss Delegation to the Assembly in his capacity of Chef du Département politique, that is Minister for Foreign Affairs, but as you know, he is at the same time President of the Confederation and, as such, desirous to welcome the Assembly on their first meeting on Swiss soil. Now I think it is generally admitted that an allocution de bienvenue by the Head of the State or the Prime Minister of the country in which the Assembly takes place is entirely in accordance with the international usages followed on such occasions. The question is at what moment would M. Motta have to deliver his speech. He is himself of opinion that his address should be the very first act of the Assembly and he should therefore rise to speak as soon as the Representatives of the various States have taken their seats in the Salle de la Réformation. After having delivered his speech he would himself take his seat in the Assembly and the chair would then be taken by the provisional President who would immediately proceed with the business of the day as arranged by the Secretary general. The point of view that the Swiss President's speech should be placed at the head of the Ordre du jour of the first sitting is generally shared at the Palais fédéral in Berne and in our conversation, M. Motta expressed the hope that matters could be arranged accordingly without inconvenience to the preparations already made or to be made for the opening ceremony. The reason why he directed me to speak to you about it is that he is anxious to be informed in due time before the meeting that arrangements in the sense of his wishes could be agreed upon; this in order to avoid any possible discussion of formalities at the last hour. Would you be so kind as to write or to speak to M. Dinichert in this matter on your arrival in Switzerland and settle it with him.

M. Motta in the course of the conversation also alluded to the election of the President of the Assembly. He seemed to be somewhat [*surprised*] by the idea that certain currents might originate amongst the Assembly in favour of the one or the other delegate as a candidate to the Presidency. Divergencies of view on this question at such a meeting seemed to him to be not altogether unlikely and it may quite be within possibility that certain competitions might lead to an election contest somewhat inconsistent with the spirit of the League itself. M. Motta personally, in the very interest of this first Assembly, would regret it if in this respect their first vote would give the impression of something like disunion. He thinks that such a contest would be an unfortunate presage in the eyes of public opinion and that therefore it would be no doubt in the general interest of the League if by a previous entente of some sort the ground could be prepared for a smooth solution of the presidential election. I asked M. Motta his views in case the Assembly would consider the election of a delegate from one of the countries not represented in the Council for instance our own. He said that the Assembly who is of course entirely free to choose its own President might have reasons to recur to such a solution. But in that case, he would certainly more than ever deplore it if the election should be complicated by competitions. It would certainly make an unfavourable impression in Switzerland, should its President be drawn into what might appear to be a struggle, quite a part from the subsequent result. He was very emphatic about it, that in any case, i.e. whether he should be elected or not, his person should not be drawn into a discussion likely to be unpleasant by the very fact that it arises. Although M. Motta's utterances in this respect were personal and confidential, I have obtained permission to mention them privately to you for your information.<sup>2</sup>

2. On n'a pas retrouvé de réponse de Drummond bien qu'il écrive dans une lettre du 5 novembre à Paravicini: [...] I discussed however the point which you raised about the procedure as to the

opening of the Assembly, with the Swiss Minister in Brussels, and explained to him the views which we held on the subject.

I attach a copy of a letter which I have just written to M. Dinichert, which will explain to you the conclusions we have arrived at.

As regards the election of the President for the Assembly, I do not feel that it would be in any way possible to influence the Assembly in any given direction on this very delicate subject. The Representatives must, to my mind, maintain an absolutely unfettered freedom of choice. I quite foresee the dangers which you mention, but I think they must be faced. [...] (E 2200 London 32/2).

*D'après une lettre du 10 décembre de Paravicini à Dinichert, Drummond a oublié de joindre à sa lettre une copie de cette réponse (ibidem) qui manque également dans les actes du Département politique et de la Légation de Suisse à Bruxelles. Répondant à la lettre de Paravicini du 10 décembre, Dinichert explique la lacune ainsi: Nous n'avons pas manqué de faire rechercher, parmi nos actes, la lettre à laquelle vous faites allusion, sans toutefois en trouver trace. La question dont il s'agit a naturellement fait l'objet d'un échange de vues verbal, à l'occasion de la première session de l'Assemblée. Il paraît cependant probable que Sir Eric Drummond n'a pas envoyé en définitive la communication dont il cite la teneur en vous écrivant. (E 2001 (B) 8/10).*