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Letter From Philander C. Knox to Robert Lansing, January 20, 1916

Philander C. Knox

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January 20, 1916.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Mr. Miller and I both feel that there is still hope of Russia's joining in principle at least and that if Russia joined the ultimate effect would be almost as good and, indeed, would be worse for Japan than if both Russia and Japan agreed.

We feel that it would be unfortunate if Russia and Japan's replies, possibly collusive, possibly based partly on pique and very likely purporting to be final, should come tumbling in here in the next two or three days.

We are also thoroughly disgusted with Great Britain's attitude.

We therefore recommend that at least to stay proceedings telegrams be sent to Tokyo and Petersburg. Herewith is a long one to Tokyo and a brief one to Petersburg, the idea being tomorrow to prepare a flattering explanation leading up to the project and to the project itself, this to allay all pique. We think this course would have the advantage at least of compelling more careful consideration and we think it would be an advantage to the dignity of the United States that

any answers adverse to the proposal should not be too prompt.

We also recommend that you send for Mr. Bryce tomorrow and give him such a talking to that he will telegraph his Government that we seem to think Great Britain sacrifices everything to the Japanese alliance; that such an attitude makes our co-operation difficult and is in contrast with the attitude of Germany, all of which naturally tends to force Germany and the United States into special relations in the Far East.

We think that in addition to this interview with Mr. Bryce some such telegram might well be sent to Reid. I hope it will be convenient to decide all these points tomorrow, as well as the answer to Davison.

When we hear tomorrow details of the Peking edict we can send the telegram which will stimulate the Chinese Government.

Reckhill may not care to explain that it was his stupidity which caused our proposal to be presented to Russia in fragmentary form. We suggest that this might be explained to the Russian Embassy here, that they may so inform their Government.

Yours very sincerely,

The Honorable Philander C. Knox,
etc., etc., etc.,
Secretary of State.