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Memorandum on the Organization of Foreign Commercial Departments, May 28, 1912

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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Great Britain.

Commercial and Sanitary Department, dealing with commercial and sanitary correspondence, with the diplomatic and consular service, with foreign representatives, the Board of Trade and other Departments in the British Government and commercial associations; commercial questions, copyright and protection of industrial property. Under the supervision of the Second Assistant Secretary.

Staff: 1 Senior Clerk $4,379.85
       1 Assistant Clerk $4,306.55
       3 Junior Clerks 979.00 to $2,919.

Germany.

Commercial Department dealing with matters of commercial nature, emigration, veterinary and quarantine business, posts, telegraph and shipping.

In charge of a Director, assisted by six Counselors, six Assistants (with the rank of Chief of Bureau), and sixteen clerks.

Italy.

Division of Commercial Affairs, dealing with commercial politics, public health, fisheries, navigation, and emigration, under the supervision of a director, and in charge of a chief of division, assisted by two section chiefs, two secretaries, two diplomatic and consular attachés and two clerks.

France.

Department of Political and Commercial Affairs, which is the more important of the two departments of the Foreign Office, and is divided into ten bureaus and sub-departments under the immediate direction of departmental directors and bureau chiefs. There is also a commercial and financial counselor, who, with the assistance of an attaché, has control of commercial and financial negotiations, preparation of commercial treaties, and the general commercial and financial relations of France.
Austria-Hungary.

Commercial Department under a separate chief, and separate from the political division of the Foreign Office, through which political matters are dealt with.

Japan.

Bureau of Commercial Affairs. Divided into three sections and dealing with commercial affairs and emigration.
In the report of the Committee of Administrative Reforms appointed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, and charged with proposing changes in the organization of the French Foreign Office, the following pertinent observations occur:

"The out-of-date and forced distinction between political and commercial affairs seems unable to be maintained for long. . . . . . . The lessons of things being repeated have led to the idea of attempting the experience of fusing political and commercial questions in certain cases. . . . . . . The advantages of fusion appear clearly. . . . . . . where international concurrences particularly frequently open up political vistas back of commercial enterprises, and where, in every case, commercial enterprise is a powerful means of political influence. When our compatriots furnish capital to a bank or obtain a railway concession, the commercial interest is not the only nor most pressing; it is then not only a question of maintaining a business matter, but also of acquiring a means of influence, of forestalling a rival, of creating rights for one's self. . . . . . . The separation of political and commercial affairs is the most often an artificial one, detrimental to the full comprehension of a question by the agent. . . . and unification appears to be a desirable measure. . . . . . . In the vast majority of cases, political and economic considerations are closely associated, and nothing is more arbitrary and dangerous than the desire to disassociate them in an abstract manner and treat them separately. . . . The example of a loan is characteristic: in all countries questions of business orders are, today, bound up with this and almost always, political agreements with other states are given as the cause of negotiations of this nature; it no longer appears admissible that the commercial
standpoint should be sacrificed to the political. An affair handled by one department often changes in aspect; generally it is the economic aspect which takes precedence of the political; but if a question of national dignity is under consideration, the commercial question immediately sinks to second place. Conclusion: fusion is enjoined. In every country, commerce and politics go today side by side and react one on the other. The separation has become impossible; in the foreign actions of nations everything is considered today and one would judge just as severely a diplomat who neglected as secondary the defense of our industrial interests, as a consul who closed his eyes to the workings of political events. We must then go farther than was thought in 1880; even permanent contact, besides not to be realized in practice, as facts have demonstrated, does not suffice; fusion is enjoined. Consequence: geographical division where the diplomatic and consular services are joined in order to treat complete questions.