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I CIRCULATE to my colleagues in the Cabinet a Memorandum on the necessity for the immediate Ratification of the Peace Treaty with Austria.

C. OF K.

Foreign Office, February 12, 1920.

SECRET

Parliamentary counsel, on instructions from the Treasury, has drafted a Bill for carrying into effect the Treaties of Peace with Austria and Bulgaria. The Austrian Treaty was signed at St. Germain on the 10th September, the Bulgarian Treaty at Neuilly on the 27th November. The Hungarian Treaty will, it is hoped, be signed shortly; in which case immediate steps will be taken to lay it before Parliament and to bring it within the scope of the draft Bill. The Austrian Treaty has already been laid before Parliament, and the Bulgarian Treaty will be laid during the next few days.

The measures which require legislation by Parliament in order to bring them into effect in the United Kingdom are of small importance in comparison with the main part of the treaties, which cannot be put into operation until after ratification. These measures are, indeed, very similar to those which Parliament has already sanctioned for the carrying out of the treaty with Germany.

On the other hand, ratification is for many political reasons urgently required, and Parliament has been informed in the King's Speech that it is intended to ratify the treaties with Austria and Bulgaria as soon as possible, and to push on the negotiations with Hungary and Turkey. Indeed, the most urgent need of South-Eastern Europe to-day is peace, which is at the same time the greatest interest of the British Empire in those countries.

The draft Bill has been communicated by the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office, the Treasury, the Home Office, the India Office, and the Board of Trade. The concurrence of these Departments has been asked in the immediate ratification of the treaty with Austria. The Board of Trade view with some alarm the proposal that ratification should be proceeded with at once, on the ground that legislation is required in order to carry out the obligations of the treaty, and that the passage of such legislation cannot be assured so long as the provisions of the treaty have not been discussed in Parliament. On the other hand, nearly all the Dominions have expressed their consent in the ratification of the treaty with Austria by the King.

It is proposed by the Foreign Office that, owing to the present conditions in Austria and in South-Eastern Europe generally, ratification by the British Empire should be deposited as soon as all the Dominion Governments have expressed their consent, without awaiting debate in the Imperial or Dominion Parliaments. The prerogative of the Crown in this matter is undoubted, and the need for immediate ratification imperative.