Ontario's Empire: Liberalism and 'Britannic' Nationalism in Laurier's Canada, 1887-1919



Graeme Andrew Thompson

St. Antony's College

University of Oxford

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For my parents and grandparents.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the nexus of politics, ideology, and identity among Anglo-Canadian liberal intellectuals during Wilfrid Laurier's leadership of the Canadian Liberal party from 1887 to 1919. This 'Laurier era' was characterised by explosive demographic and economic expansion, the consolidation of Canada's political and constitutional order, and its rising international stature within British Empire. But it also witnessed divisive disputes over the nature and development of the new Confederation. These debates over 'Dominion nation-building' were central to Canadian political and intellectual life, shaping the evolution of liberal ideology and the growth of national and imperial sentiment. In particular, the thesis focuses on a group of liberal intellectuals and politicians who resided in or originated from the province of Ontario and associated with Laurier during his reign as Prime Minister and leader of the Opposition. It reinterprets their debates in global and local contexts, specifically through the lens of a 'Greater Ontario' - a virtual province of Canada and the British world comprised of 'Old' Ontario, with its metropolis at Toronto, and the 'neo-Ontarian' settler empire of the Prairie West. Its argument is threefold. First, it argues these liberals envisaged Canada, with 'Greater Ontario' at its heart, as a 'British nation' rooted in North America. Their growing sense of Canadian nationalism was distinctly 'Britannic' - indeed, 'British-American' - and drew upon civic as well as racial ideas of 'Britishness.' Second, it maintains that the political, ideological, and regional fault lines within Ontario's liberal tradition consequently shaped their competing visions of the Dominion, the British Empire, and the wider Anglo-world. And third, it contends that these debates illuminate the rise and subsequent disintegration of Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal party in 'Greater Ontario.' The thesis thus contributes a new perspective to the political and intellectual history of Canada and the British world.

Long Abstract

This thesis examines the nexus of politics, ideology, and identity among Anglo-Canadian liberal intellectuals during Sir Wilfrid Laurier's leadership of the Canadian Liberal party from 1887 to 1919. This 'Laurier era' was characterised by explosive demographic and economic expansion, the consolidation of the Dominion of Canada's political and constitutional order, and its rising international stature as part of the British Empire. But it also witnessed passionate and often divisive political disputes over the nature and development of the new Confederation. These debates over 'Dominion nation-building' were central to Canadian political and intellectual life, illuminating the evolution of liberal ideology and the symbiotic growth of national and imperial sentiment. The themes of liberalism, nationalism, and imperialism, of course, are integral to Canadian historiography. This thesis, however, explores Canadian politics and political thought from a new perspective, emphasising the global as well as local contexts that shaped Anglo-Canadian liberalism, nationalism, and Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal party. In particular, it reinterprets debates over Dominion nation-building through the lens of a 'Greater Ontario' - a virtual province of Canada and the British world comprised of 'Old' Ontario, with its metropolis at Toronto, and the 'neo-Ontarian' settler empire of the Prairie West. Its principal argument is threefold. First, it argues that these liberals envisaged Canada, with 'Greater Ontario' at its heart, as a 'British nation' rooted in North America. Their growing sense of Canadian nationalism and identity was distinctly 'Britannic' - indeed, 'British-American' - and drew upon civic as well as racial ideas of 'Britishness.' Second, it maintains that the political, ideological, and regional fault lines within Ontario's peculiar liberal tradition consequently shaped competing visions of the Dominion, the British Empire, and the wider Anglo-world. And third, it contends that these debates among liberal intellectuals illuminate the rise and subsequent disintegration of Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal party in 'Greater Ontario' and Anglophone Canada in general.

The thesis employs a contextualist approach to the history of political thought and draws upon the historiography of the 'British world' to explore how ideas of 'Britishness' informed and legitimised liberal conceptions of Canadian nation-building. Liberal intellectuals, in other words, constructed ideologies of Canadian nationalism within, and with reference to, local Ontarian as well as global British and Anglophone political and intellectual contexts. These were not merely academic debates. The success of Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal party reflected, and to an underappreciated extent depended upon, its standing in Anglophone Canada. This was especially true among liberals in the province of Ontario - the dominant political, economic, and literary centre of Anglophone Canada - and its 'neo-Ontarian' agrarian hinterland. The thesis thus focuses on a group of English-speaking journalists, professors, politicians, and writers that either resided in or originated from Ontario and associated with Laurier. It reveals that the political thought of these 'Greater Ontario' liberals was deeply affected by Ontario's distinct liberal tradition as well as the ideas and identities that bound together 'Greater Britain' and the 'Anglo-world.' It further illuminates their centrality to the development of Anglo-Canadian liberalism and nationalism, and to the informal ideological coalition that sustained the Liberal party west of the Ottawa River.

During the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-centuries Anglophone political thought was imbued with ideas of nation, race, and empire. These concepts informed the social construction of identities and political ideologies. 'Greater Ontario' liberalism was no exception. Anglo-Canadians widely regarded themselves as members of a British or Anglo-Saxon 'race'; nationalism was debated in conjunction with notions of Greater British and Anglo-world politics and identity; and the multifaceted and evolving precepts of liberalism were mobilised in favour of both imperialism and anti-imperialism. Narrow historical debates over continental trade, imperial federalism, and political independence obscured the fact that the central tenets of Anglo-Canadian 'Britannic nationalism' - the political separation of British America from the American Republic and its 'connection' to the wider British world, a commitment to parliamentary and monarchical institutions, and the bi-racial Anglo-protestant and French-Catholic foundations of Confederation - were widely accepted. It was

the nature and political implications of Canada's British and Anglo-Saxon character that were open to debate.

Historians have long-recognised that imperialist and conservative intellectuals were Canadian nationalists as well as Anglo-Saxon and British 'race patriots.' Assessing Canada's liberal tradition proved more problematic. Despite the legacy of United Empire Loyalism Ontario was the heartland of 'British-American' liberalism in the late-nineteenth-century, dominated by Toronto's George Brown and the populist, localist, and agrarian 'Grit' ideology of the province's rural west. Canada's 'Nationalist' historiography, however, later perpetuated an exaggerated dichotomy between nationalism, continentalism, and liberalism on one hand, and imperialism, Britishness, and conservatism on the other. This paid insufficient attention to the competing British and Anglo traditions invoked by Anglo-Canadian liberals and ignored the vocabularies, ideas, and alliances that they shared with their political and ideological opponents. Indeed, the Liberal variant of the Nationalist argument - that Anglo-Canadian liberals were more North American and nationalistic, and therefore progressive and modern, in contrast to their reactionary British and imperialist contemporaries - remains influential. But new research in British and Imperial history challenges this framework. Historians such as Duncan Bell, James Belich, Phillip Buckner, John Darwin, and J.G.A. Pocock, among others, emphasise that Britons in the United Kingdom and its settler colonies imagined themselves as part of a 'British world,' or 'Greater Britain' - nested within a wider 'Anglo-world' including the United States - that was underpinned by a shared culture, political loyalties, and ostensibly, race. 'Britishness' was an amalgam that included, but was not synonymous with, Anglo-Saxonism and British 'race patriotism' and was open to competing national, regional, and ideological interpretations. Though 'Greater Ontario' liberals deployed arguments that drew upon the language of Britishness and Anglo-Saxonism there was no general agreement on precisely what these ideas meant or the political consequences they entailed.

From the first election that Wilfrid Laurier contested as leader of the Liberal party until the end of the Great War, Canadian politics hinged on his appeal to 'Greater Ontario' in general and the

Grit tradition in particular. From 1896-1911 Anglo-Canadians coalesced behind the Liberal party and Laurier's Premiership to consolidate Confederation, reinvigorate western colonisation and settlement, and assert the Dominion's standing in the British Empire. These were three elements of the same nation-building project. At the same time, British intellectuals and politicians sought to harness the emerging political and economic power of the Dominions. 'Constructive imperialists' challenged Gladstonian liberalism and its vision of a British world based on free trade, Home Rule, and colonial independence. This Gladstonian view of 'empire' corresponded with three pillars of the Ontario liberal tradition: freer trade with both the British Empire and the United States; a decentralised Confederation premised on 'provincial rights'; and Dominion autonomy within a Greater Britain of self-governing 'British nations.' It was on this basis that 'Greater Ontario' liberals initially aligned with Laurier. To win and maintain power, however, Laurier also had to appeal to French-Canadian *Nationalistes* and the more protectionist and imperialist elements of Toronto's 'Liberal plutocracy.' This political alliance became increasingly tenuous as industrialisation and urbanisation transformed 'Old' Ontario while 'explosive colonisation' shifted political, economic, and demographic power to the Prairie West. Meanwhile, liberal ideology across the Anglo-world increasingly shifted towards progressivism, imperialism, and protectionism at the expense of classical or 'Gladstonian' liberalism. Thus when Laurier later defended Grit and Gladstonian principles - as in the 1911 campaign for freer trade, or 'reciprocity,' with the United States and the establishment of an autonomous Royal Canadian Navy - many of his former allies had abandoned the old orthodoxies. The mounting divisions among Anglo-Canadian liberals were exacerbated by the Great War. By Laurier's death in 1919 the Dominion had firmly established its claim to Britannic nationhood, though 'Greater Ontario' liberals were regionally and ideologically divided while the political coalition that sustained the Liberal party had effectively disintegrated.

These political developments were chronicled in the published works and private correspondence of the period. This thesis analyses these and other sources to illuminate the shifting ideological and political ground that underpinned Anglo-Canadian visions of Dominion nation-

building as well as the political trajectory of the Liberal party. It concentrates in particular on the arguments, ideas, and relationships of leading 'Greater Ontario' liberals. The central figure, aside from Laurier, was Sir John Willison, the editor of the Toronto *Globe* and later the Toronto *News* as well as an important contributor to the London *Times* and the *Round Table*. Willison was Laurier's primary Anglophone advisor from the late 1880s until 1904-5 when he increasingly allied with Conservative leader Sir Robert Borden. This transition sheds light on the intellectual currents and political developments in the Dominion and the wider British Empire. In this respect, Willison and Laurier anchor the thesis as the central nodes within a wider network of intellectuals and politicians, including: Henri Bourassa, John Dafoe, George Denison, John Ewart, Arthur Glazebrook, G.M. Grant, W.L. Grant, W.D. Gregory, W.L.M. King, Edward Kylie, George Parkin, Adam Shortt, Clifford Sifton, Oscar Skelton, Goldwin Smith, B.E. Walker, and George Wrong. Centred in Toronto, Kingston, and Winnipeg, and with intimate connections to Dominion politics at Ottawa, they were among the most significant representatives of 'Greater Ontario' liberalism during the 'Laurier era.' Despite their evident generational, ideological, political, and regional divisions each expressed support for Wilfrid Laurier at different points between 1887-1919 and agreed that Canada was a fundamentally 'British' nation.

The thesis proceeds thematically to illustrate that different conceptions of Britannic nationalism shaped how 'Greater Ontario' liberals responded to key political events and debates. These included the role of French-Canadians in the Dominion and the Empire, constitutional and political relations with Greater Britain and the United States, the colonisation and settlement of the North-West territories, economic and trade policy, ideas of political 'progress,' and Canada's role in the Great War. The resulting disputes resisted simplistic classification. Anglophone liberals variously deployed the rhetoric of liberalism, nationalism, imperialism, Britishness, and Anglo-Saxonism to support and legitimise their particular arguments and perspectives. The use of these concepts, moreover, evolved over time and in response to shifting domestic, imperial, and international political contexts. From the 1880s through the South African War, Anglo-Canadians coalesced behind

Wilfrid Laurier as he positioned the Liberals as the party of a pan-Canadian civic or 'Gladstonian' Britishness that could encompass both Anglo and French-Canadians. But the key to Laurier's electoral success was not merely that he straddled the two solitudes of Anglo and French-Canada. Indeed, he also successfully bridged the ideological and regional divisions within Anglophone Canada: between free traders and protectionists; 'autonomists,' who supported Canadian independence, and imperialists, who envisioned the Dominion as an integral part of a political union of the British Empire; and the Grit and 'Whig' traditions of Ontario liberalism - all without jeopardising his core support in Quebec or 'Greater Ontario.'

This reconciliation, however, did not last. Predictably, imperialists and protectionists - enticed by the 'constructive imperialist' vision of the economic, military, and political integration of Greater Britain - were the first to abandon Laurier's Anglo coalition in the early-1900s, punctuated by the defection of the Toronto 'Liberal plutocracy' at the 1911 general election. But the loss of more moderate liberals, including close allies and advisers, as well as the broader decline of Gladstonian liberalism was more damaging. Most notably, John Dafoe, Clifford Sifton, and John Willison exemplified the combination of, and tension between, Anglo-Saxonism and British 'race patriotism' on one hand, and a civic idea of 'Britishness' on the other. Their defections to Robert Borden between 1905-1917 portended the demise of the Liberal party in Greater Ontario and the disintegration of Laurier's alliance with the leaders - though not necessarily the rank and file - of Ontario's Grit liberal tradition. While their grievances were specific and distinct, they reflected a broader disillusionment among Anglo-Canadians over Laurier's apparent appeasement of Quebec; growing liberal support for protectionism and Imperial tariff reform; and opposition to Laurier's position on Imperial defence, both with respect to the establishment of a Canadian navy and the imposition of conscription during the Great War. Though John Ewart, W.D. Gregory, W.L.M. King, and Oscar Skelton were among the most significant liberals who remained loyal to the Liberal party throughout the 'Laurier era,' their attachment to Wilfrid Laurier - when juxtaposed to the defections of their friends and contemporaries - illustrated the bifurcation of 'Greater Ontario' liberalism along

Grit-Whig and autonomist-imperialist lines. Yet even these 'Laurier Liberals' did not reject Britishness or Canada's British connection. On the contrary, they turned Britannic nationalism against imperialism and invoked the traditions and inheritance of British and Ontario liberalism to promote racial conciliation between Anglo and French-Canadians as well as Canada's enduring membership of a 'Gladstonian' Greater Britain.

This is not to say that 'Greater Ontario' liberals wholly determined the rise and disintegration of Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal party. Insurgent French-Canadian *Nationalistes*, Robert Borden's reconstruction of the Conservative party, and the political inertia induced by fifteen years in power undermined Laurier's position. They did, however, play an important role in both cultivating and reflecting the political context in Anglophone Canada. Moreover, the extent to which liberals internalised the normative premises, assumptions, and languages of 'Britishness' and Anglo-Saxonism betrays the unsatisfactory conclusions of Canada's 'Nationalist' historiography. Though by 1919 'Greater Ontario' liberalism had fractured along regional and ideological lines, with the Liberal party eviscerated west of Quebec, these divisions derived from competing conceptions of Britannic nationalism and Ontario's liberal tradition. It is necessary, therefore, to exhume and analyse the political thought of 'Greater Ontario' liberals to elucidate the variety of ways that they conceived of the project to build a British-American Dominion under the leadership of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. This thesis contributes to that task and expounds a new perspective on the political and intellectual history of Canada and the British Empire.

Abbreviations

Primary Sources

AHR	-	*American Historical Review*
CR	-	*Contemporary Review*
MR	-	*Monthly Review*
NC	-	*The Nineteenth Century*
NAR	-	*North American Review*
QQ	-	*Queen's Quarterly*
RT	-	*The Round Table*
UE	-	*United Empire*
UM	-	*University Magazine*

Secondary Sources

BW	-	*Britain and the World*
CHBE	-	*Cambridge History of the British Empire*
CHR	-	*Canadian Historical Review*
EHR	-	*English Historical Review*
HJ	-	*Historical Journal*
HP	-	*Historical Papers*
JCHA	-	*Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*
JCS	-	*Journal of Canadian Studies*
JCCH	-	*Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*
JICH	-	*Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*
OHBE	-	*Oxford History of the British Empire*
RCHA	-	*Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association*
UTQ	-	*University of Toronto Quarterly*

Introduction

"I am in favour of a union of the British American colonies, first, because it will raise us from the attitude of a number of inconsiderable colonies into a great and powerful people."[1]
- George Brown, 1865

I

In the summer of 1888, Wilfrid Laurier (1841-1919), the new leader of Canada's Liberal party, embarked on a tour of the province of Ontario. It was the French-Canadian's first political foray into the emphatically British and 'Anglo-Saxon' province, and there was reason to be pessimistic. The young Dominion of Canada was languishing, beset by economic depression, emigration, and racial, religious, and regional antagonisms - none more acute than between Anglo-protestant Ontario and French-Catholic Quebec.[2] When Laurier opened his tour at Oakville, a lakefront town nestled among the farms west of Toronto, he caught the prevailing mood:

> It is now twenty-one years since Confederation was established. We started with the hope...that we would link together the British provinces on the continent of America, that we would bind them together with ties of affection and mutual pride and that we would make them a nation...[But] how far have we advanced in the task we set ourselves to perform twenty-one years ago? Sir, the painful answer must be that we have not advanced one iota, one single jot.[3]

Yet over the next thirty years the Dominion advanced by leaps and bounds. A colossal economic 'boom' transformed Ontario from an agrarian society into the heartland of a new urban industrial economy; a great empire of settlement arose on the western plains beyond the Great Lakes; and Anglo-Canadians' new confidence in their Confederation matched its growing stature in the British Empire.[4] In Anglophone Canada, the now Sir Wilfrid Laurier - Prime Minister from 1896 to 1911 and Liberal leader until his death in 1919 - went from a virtually unknown Quebec MP to "the Foremost Statesman of Greater Britain."[5] The confederation was no longer a mere collection of

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[1] Quoted in Alex. Mackenzie (ed.), *The Life and Speeches of Hon. George Brown* (Toronto: The Globe, 1882), p. 319.
[2] Robert Bothwell, *The Penguin History of Canada* (Toronto: Penguin, 2006), ch. 9.
[3] Wilfrid Laurier, "Mr. Laurier before the people of Ontario," in Ulric Barte (ed.), *Wilfrid Laurier on the Platform, 1871-1890* (Quebec City: Turcotte & Menard's, 1890), p. 444.
[4] James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 406-17, 460-73; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 148-59.
[5] *Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier: Foremost Statesman of Greater Britain* (Ottawa: Capital Press Limited, [1911]).

colonies, liberal journalist John Dafoe (1864-1944) later explained: "Canada is a North American nation...[and] one of a family of free...British nations[.]"[6]

This thesis seeks to understand and explain how Anglo-Canadian liberals viewed this transformation by revisiting their political disputes during the 'Laurier era.' It situates these arguments within a broader debate over the future of the British Empire and aims to shed new light on the historical development of Ontario liberalism and Canadian nation-building in imperial and global context. The themes of nationalism, imperialism, and liberalism, of course, are central to Canadian historiography.[7] This dissertation, however, recovers an underappreciated and often ignored element of this story: the significance of ideas of 'Britishness' to liberal visions of Canada. Specifically, it explores the political languages in which liberals imagined and debated Canada's development as a 'British-American' Dominion - a polity premised on the importation and cultivation of Britishness in a North American context. More generally, it outlines the shifting ideological contours of Ontario liberalism and elucidates the rise and disintegration of the informal political coalition that sustained Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal party in Anglophone Canada. In short, it addresses the principal questions: how, to what extent, and with what political consequences did Wilfrid Laurier and his Anglo-Canadian liberal allies imagine Canada as a 'British nation'?

II

It is fair to say that, until recently, Canadian historians were more interested in overcoming the British connection than examining it. As James Belich writes: "It is as though the one-time Dominions share a shameful secret - a protracted adolescence, decades long, spent firmly tied to mother's

[6] John Dafoe, *Canada: An American Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), pp. 5-6.
[7] See especially Carl Berger (ed.), *Imperial Relations in the Age of Laurier* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969); Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970); Douglas Cole, "Canada's 'nationalistic' imperialists," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 5:3 (1970), pp. 44-9; Arthur Lower, *Colony to Nation: A History of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977 [1946]); Frank Underhill, *In Search of Canadian Liberalism* (Don Mills, On: Oxford University Press, 2013 [1960]).

apron-strings - which is best forgotten."[8] Indeed, the 'end of empire' fuelled a deluge of historical writing on Canadian nationalism and identity.[9] But Britishness, at least among liberals, was out. As the radical historian Frank Underhill noted, by the 1960s liberal intellectuals had "abandon[ed] the concept of *British* North America as defining the Canadian identity."[10]

Yet Britishness formerly anchored Anglo-Canadian historiography and the settler Dominions of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand were once central to the history of the British Empire.[11] The *Cambridge History of the British Empire* (1930), for example, lauded Wilfrid Laurier, not as a Canadian nationalist, but as a "vivid illustration of the British genius for empire."[12] This was echoed by Laurier's liberal contemporaries who believed that he reconciled Dominion self-government with the British connection.[13] The liberal triumph was again summarised by Underhill: "[F]aith both in Canadian autonomy and in imperial unity...has been characteristic of Canadian liberal thinking from the start. What liberals in Canada have sought throughout has not been the breaking of the tie with Great Britain but the changing of its nature to that of a free association of equals."[14]

By mid-century, however, this 'Whig interpretation' was out of fashion.[15] Imperial historians followed Robinson and Gallagher's fruitful enquiries into economic imperialism and informal

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[8] Belich, *Replenishing*, p. 473.

[9] See Ramsay Cook's quip that "we have had too much nationalism, not too little, in Canada." Ramsay Cook, *The Maple Leaf Forever: Essays on Nationalism and Politics in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), p. 7.

[10] Frank Underhill, "Foreword," in Peter Russell (ed.), *Nationalism in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. xvi (emphasis in original). See also C.P. Champion, *The Strange Demise of British Canada: The Liberals and Canadian Nationalism, 1964-68* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); Jose Igartua, *The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945-71* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006).

[11] J. Holland Rose et al., (eds.), *CHBE*, VI, *Canada and Newfoundland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930). Volume 3 focused on the 'Empire-Commonwealth' while volume 7 concerned Australia and New Zealand.

[12] W. Stewart Wallace, "The Conservative and Liberal Administrations, 1885-1911," in *Ibid*., p. 513.

[13] John Dafoe, *Laurier: A Study in Canadian Politics* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1922), pp. 52-3; O.D. Skelton, *The Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, vol. II (New York: The Century, 1922), p. 292; John Willison, *Reminiscences*: Personal and Political (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1919), pp. 307-8.

[14] Underhill, *Canadian Liberalism*, p. 43. See also Frank Underhill, *The British Commonwealth: An Experiment in Co-operation Among Nations* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1956).

[15] J.G.A. Pocock, "The neo-Britains and the three empires," in *The Discovery of Islands: Essays in British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 190-91. See especially W.K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, Volume I: Problems of Nationality, 1918-1936* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964 [1937]), and Nicholas Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience, Volume One: The Durham Report to the Anglo-Irish Treaty* (London: Macmillan, 1982 [1969]).

empire,[16] while Canada's post-Dominion liberal historians charted the emergence of distinct national and "limited identities" rooted in North America.[17] This 'Liberal Nationalist' school, though, often succumbed to anachronism in its search for a liberal, North American, and 'un-British' Canada.[18] Joseph Schull's *Laurier* (1965), for instance, was unironically subtitled "the First Canadian."[19] The ostensibly "anti-British" character of Canadian liberalism was reinforced by conservative critics who affirmed the association of Britishness with conservatism.[20] Even Carl Berger's *The Sense of Power* (1970), which claimed "Imperialism was one form of Canadian nationalism," entrenched the perception that attachment to the empire was fundamentally "reactionary."[21] This dichotomous view of Britishness, buttressed by liberals and conservatives alike, continues to shape a 'Nationalist interpretation' of Canadian historiography.

By the late-twentieth-century, social historians pushed politics, the British Empire, and studies of "Canada as a national community" towards the margins of historical research.[22] Yet over

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[16] John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 6:1 (1953), pp. 1-15. See also P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas, I: The Old Colonial System, 1688-1850," *Economic History Review* 39:4 (1986), pp. 501-525, and "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas II: New Imperialism, 1850-1945," *Idem*., 40:1 (1987), pp. 1-26; Ibid., *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2001). An exception is Max Beloff, *Britain's Liberal Empire, 1897-1921* (London: Methuen, 1969).

[17] See for example Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing since 1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), ch. 6; Allen Smith *Canada - An American Nation? Essays on Continentalism, Identity, and the Canadian Frame of Mind* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994). For 'limited identities' see J.M.S. Careless, "'Limited Identities' in Canada," *CHR* 50:1 (1969), pp. 1-10; Ramsay Cook, "Canadian Centennial Celebrations," *International Journal* 22:4 (1967), p. 663. See also Phillip Buckner, "'Limited Identities' Revisited: Regionalism and Nationalism in Canadian History," *Acadiensis* 30:1 (2000), pp. 4-16; Doug Owram, "Intellectual History in the Land of Limited Identities," *JCS* 24:3 (1989), pp. 114-28.

[18] Champion, *Death of British Canada*, p. 34.

[19] Joseph Schull, *Laurier: The First Canadian* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1965).

[20] Donald Creighton, "Towards the Discovery of Canada," *UTQ* 25:3 (1956), pp. 275-6; G.P. Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1965). See also Berger, *Canadian History*, pp. 225-37.

[21] Berger, *The Sense of* Power, pp. 259.

[22] Carl Berger, "Introduction," in Carl Berger (ed.), *Contemporary Approaches to Canadian History* (Toronto: Copp, Clark, Pitman, 1987), p. 1. See especially J.L. Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto: Harper-Collins, 1998); Doug Owram, "Canada and the Empire," in Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *OHBE V: Historiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 146-62. Important exceptions include Colin Coates (ed.), *Imperial Canada, 1867-1917: A selection of papers given at the University of Edinburgh's Centre of Canadian Studies Conference, May 1995* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, Centre of Canadian Studies, 1997); John Eddy and Deryck Schreuder, *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism: Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa first assert their nationalities, 1880-1914* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988); John Kendle, T*he Round Table Movement and Imperial Union* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975); Philip Wigley, *Canada and*

the past two decades historians have begun to recover from the 'fit of absence of mind' that relegated the British Empire from Canadian history.[23] This is due in large measure to the rediscovery of the British Dominions by imperial historians. 'British world' histories are at the forefront of this development, building on the work of historians J.G.A. Pocock[24] and Linda Colley[25] to investigate the transoceanic community - both real and imagined - that linked the United Kingdom and its settler empire in the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries.[26] This diasporic British world - connected by networks of people, goods, and ideas - was sustained, they conclude, by a shared sense of Britishness.[27]

This global British or 'Britannic' identity took two forms which in practice overlapped: a racial Anglo-Saxonism sometimes expressed as 'British race patriotism'; and a sense of Dominion co-ownership of British history, literature, culture, institutions, and even - but not necessarily - the British Empire. The first was fundamentally racialist and exclusionary in that "'Anglo-Saxonism' was...circumscribed (but not fully delineated) by whiteness."[28] At the same time, it was occasionally -

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the Transition to Commonwealth: British-Canadian Relations, 1917-1926 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). For imperial history during this period, see David Fieldhouse, "Can Humpty-Dumpty be put together again? Imperial history in the 1980s," *JICH* 12:2 (1984), pp. 9-23.

[23] Phillip Buckner, "Presidential Address: Whatever Happened to the British Empire?" *JCHA* 4:1 (1993), pp. 3-32 and "Was there a 'British' Empire? 'The Oxford History of the British Empire' from a Canadian Perspective," *Acadiensis* 32:1 (2002), pp. 110-28.

[24] See especially J.G.A. Pocock, "British History: A Plea for a New Subject," *The Journal of Modern History* 47:4 (1975), p. 601-21, and "The New British History in Atlantic Perspective: An Antipodean Commentary," *AHR* 104:2 (1999), pp. 490-500. For criticisms see David Armitage, "Greater Britain: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?" *AHR* 104:2 (1999), pp. 427-45, and Richard Bourke, "Pocock and the Presuppositions of the New British History," *HJ* 53:3 (2010), pp. 747-70.

[25] Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," *Journal of British Studies* 31:4 (1992), pp. 309-29, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

[26] Charles Dilke, *Greater Britain: a record of travel in English-Speaking Countries during 1866 and 1867* , 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1868); J.A. Froude, *Oceana, or, England and her colonies* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1886); J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1883). For 'imagined communities' see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

[27] See for example Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich (eds.), *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (eds.), *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005); Gary Magee and Andrew Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods, and Capital in the British World, c. 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks and the British Academic World, 1850-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Simon Potter, *News and the British World: The Emergence of an Imperial Press System, 1876-1922* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).

[28] Duncan Bell, "Before the democratic peace: Racial utopianism, empire and the abolition of war," *European Journal of International Relations* 20:3 (2013), pp. 649-50; Idem., "Beyond the Sovereign State: Isopolitan

and in a limited sense - inclusive; by emphasising supposed racial kinship it could embrace Britain's 'Celtic fringe,' French-Canadians, Afrikaners, and even expand the British world into an 'Anglo-world' that included the United States.[29] The second, however, entailed a potentially expansive notion of "'Britishness' as a form of civic nationalism that included the adoption of certain values and institutions defined as 'British[.]'"[30]

Three further points are worth highlighting. First, that Britishness was global in scope yet local in interpretation. There was no contradiction between a 'Greater British' identity and Dominion, regional, and local identities.[31] Second, that nation-building in the Dominions was underpinned by the complementarity of those identities. As historian John Darwin writes: "In Canada, Australia, [and] New Zealand...national identity was asserted by rejecting subservience to the British *government*, but affirming equality with Britain as 'British peoples' or 'nations.'"[32] 'Dominion nation-building,' then, was conceived in terms of the reproduction, indeed the *improvement*, of Britishness in the context of overseas settlement.[33] This was "Britannic nationalism."[34] Finally, Greater Britain was conceptually distinct from Britain's 'dependent' empire.[35] In fact, it was common for anti-imperialists to identify with an idealised Britishness and imagine themselves as part of a wider British or Anglo-world. Britishness was an amalgam that included - but

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Citizenship, Race and Anglo-American Union," *Political Studies* 62:2 (2014), p. 420. See also Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[29] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 5, 466-7.

[30] Phillip Buckner, "Reinventing the British World," *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 92:368 (2003), p. 81.

[31] Ibid., pp. 79-80. See also Phillip Buckner, "The Creation of the Dominion of Canada, 1860-1901," in Phillip Buckner (ed.), *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 67; Stuart Ward, "Imperial Identities Abroad," in Sarah Stockwell, ed., *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 220. See also Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007).

[32] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 147.

[33] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 466-8.

[34] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 147. Alternatively, "Dominionism." James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the year 2000* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), pp. 108-18.

[35] Pocock, *The Discovery of Islands*, p. 188.

was not synonymous with - Anglo-Saxonism and was open to competing national, regional, and ideological interpretations.[36]

This is confirmed by historians of "imperial political thought."[37] These scholars, David Armitage writes, seek to "reintegrate the history of the British Empire with...intellectual history" and situate "ideologies of empire" in their historical contexts.[38] A landmark here is *The Idea of Greater Britain* (2007), where Duncan Bell revealed the variety of ways that British intellectuals conceived of the settler empire. There was "no such thing as a 'representative' proponent of Greater Britain," Bell argues. They "traversed, and as such collapsed, the procrustean categories" of Victorian political thought.[39] Contextualist historians thus warn that liberalism was itself ideologically contested and for this reason cannot be categorised simply as either imperialist or anti-imperialist.[40] Many liberals equated Britishness (sometimes 'Englishness') with constitutional liberty and upheld Greater Britain even as they opposed imperialism. Liberal "anti-imperialists," Mira Matikkala argues, "generally approved of the self-governing settler empire."[41] British attachment to the Dominions, as well as to the United States, therefore, was rooted in politically fluid notions of British and Anglo identity. But while contextualist historians have reshaped our understanding of how liberalism was entwined with

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[36] See Duncan Bell, "Democracy and Empire: J.A. Hobson, Leonard Hobhouse, and the Crisis of Liberalism," in Ian Hall and Lisa Hill (eds.), *British International Thinkers from Hobbes to Namier* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), ch. 10; Idem., "Republican Imperialism: J.A. Froude and the Virtue of Empire," *History of Political Thought* 30:1 (2009), pp. 166-91; Idem., *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Buckner, "Reinventing the British World," p. 81.

[37] Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 22-5.

[38] David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 3-4. On contextualism see especially See J.G.A. Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989 [1960]), Idem., "Theory in History: Problems of Context and Narrative," in John Dryzek and Bonnie Honig (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 163-74; Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Volume I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[39] Bell, *Greater Britain*, p. 26.

[40] Duncan Bell, *Remaking the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press (2016), pp. 1-2; Idem., "What is Liberalism?" *Political Theory* 42:6 (2014), pp. 686-8; Michael Freeden and Marc Stears, "Liberalism," in Michael Freeden et al (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 329-47; Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2010), pp. 8, 209; Mira Matikkala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition: Liberty, Englishness and Anti-Imperialism in Late-Victorian Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), p. 7.

[41] Matikkala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition*, p. 145.

Britishness, Anglo-Saxonism, and imperialism, their analyses tend to proceed outwards from the United Kingdom. For a more complete picture historians must turn to the Dominions.

In this respect, the growth of global, imperial, transnational, and British world perspectives in Canadian history signals the end of the stifling "provincialism" diagnosed by A.G. Hopkins.[42] Often, however, these studies reflect the priorities of social history at the expense of politics, political thought, and nation-building.[43] At the same time, Canadian intellectual history - marked in contrast by its traditional interest in nationalist ideologies[44] - has experienced a renaissance in recent years.[45] But this literature, though valuable, has seemingly overlooked new developments in British world historiography. Indeed, the Nationalist interpretation of the history of Canadian political thought, effectively restated in Damien-Claude Bélanger's *Prejudice and Pride* (2011), remains influential. This is due, in part, to the resilience of two familiar but overstated assumptions: First, that Anglo-Canadian imperialism, defined by Berger as the "movement for the closer union of the British Empire

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[42] A.G. Hopkins, "Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History," *Past & Present* 164 (1999), p. 216. See for example Lisa Chilton, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860s-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Christopher Dummitt and Michael Dawson, *Contesting Clio's Craft: New Directions and Debates in Canadian History* (London: The Institute for the Study of the Americas (ISA), 2009); Paula Hastings and Jacob Remes, "Empire, Continent and Transnationalism in Canadian History: Essays in Honor of John Herd Thompson," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 45:1 (2015), pp. 1-7; James Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British: The Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013); Jonathan Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire: Canada, Britain, and Two World Wars* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[43] See for example Karen Dubinsky, Adele Perry, and Henry Yu (eds.), *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

[44] See for example Janet Ajzenstat and Peter J. Smith (eds.), *Canada's Origins: Liberal, Tory, or Republican?* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1995); G. Horowitz, "Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism in Canada: An Interpretation," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 32:2 (1966), pp. 143-71;Ian McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," *CHR* 81 (2000), pp. 617-45; Peter J. Smith, "The Ideological Origins of Canadian Confederation," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 20:1 (1987), pp. 3-29.

[45] See for example Damien-Claude Bélanger, Sophie Coupal, and Michel Ducharme (eds.), *Les idées en mouvement: perspectives en histoire intellectuelle et culturelle du Canada* (Quebec City: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2004); Damien-Claude Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride: Canadian Intellectuals Confront the United States, 1891-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Jean-François Constant and Michel Ducharme (eds.), *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Michel Ducharme, *The Idea of Liberty in Canada During the Ages of Atlantic Revolutions, 1776-1838*, trans. Peter Feldstein (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014); Katherine Fierlbeck, *Political Thought in Canada: An Intellectual History* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2006); Edward Kohn, *This Kindred People: Canadian-American Relations and the Anglo-Saxon Idea, 1895-1903* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004); Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick (eds.), *Canadas of the Mind: The Making and Unmaking of Canadian Nationalism in the Twentieth-Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).

through...political changes which would give the dominions influence over imperial policy,"[46] epitomised a 'British-Canadian' or 'imperial' nationalism that was reactionary, conservative, and often anti-American.[47] Second, that Wilfrid Laurier and his beleaguered Anglo-Canadian liberal allies were the vanguard of an "un-British Canadian nationalism."[48] In this view, exponents of a 'modern' Canadian nationalism, continentalism, and liberalism, on one hand, confronted 'anti-modern' proponents of Britishness, imperialism, and conservatism on the other.[49] There is, admittedly, some truth to this dichotomy.[50] Pressed too far, however, it obscures more than it illuminates - downplaying ideological diversity and the importance of multiple identities, foreclosing the possibility of alternative explanations, and inviting a series of methodological dangers.[51] The root of the problem, as historian Phillip Buckner has insightfully noted, is that Berger's portrait of imperialism excluded perhaps the majority of Anglo-Canadians - those "who believed in a decentralized Empire."[52]

III

[46] Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 3.

[47] Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), p. 31. See also David Cannadine, "Imperial Canada: Old History, New Problems," *Imperial Canada 1867-1917*, pp. 1-19; Kevin Colclough, "Imperial Nationalism: Nationalism and the Empire in late nineteenth century Scotland and British Canada," Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2006; Norman Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism, 1896-1899* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965).

[48] Peter Price, "Fashioning a Constitutional Narrative: John S. Ewart and the Development of a 'Canadian Constitution,'" *The CHR* 93:3 (2012), p. 363. For a recent assessment, see Norman Hillmer, *O.D. Skelton: A Portrait of Canadian Ambition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), pp. 8-13. For a different view see Douglas Cole, "John S. Ewart and Canadian Nationalism," *HP* 4:1 (1969), pp. 62-73.

[49] See especially Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*. See also Philip Massolin, *Canadian Intellectuals, the Tory Tradition, and the Challenge of Modernity, 1939-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 3-19; Donald Wright, "W.D. Lighthall and David Ross McCord: Antimodernism and English-Canadian Imperialism, 1880s-1918," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32:2 (1997), pp. 134-53.

[50] See for example Robert Craig Brown, *Canada's National Policy, 1883-1900: A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964); David Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty in Upper Canada, 1784-1850* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988); S.F. Wise, "Conservatism and Political Development: The Canadian Case," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 69 (1970), pp. 226-43; Patricia Wood, "Defining 'Canadian': Anti-Americanism and Identity in Sir John A. Macdonald's Nationalism," *JCS* 36:2 (2001), pp. 49-69.

[51] For a similar criticism, see Kevin Anderson, "Canadian Political History and Ideas: Intersections and Influences," *History Compass* 12:5 (2014), p. 444.

[52] Phillip Buckner, "The Long Goodbye: English Canadians and the British World," in *Rediscovering the British World*, p. 187.

It is at this juncture that the present study enters the field. Its purpose is twofold. First, it aims to challenge and disrupt the Nationalist interpretation by reframing the history of Ontario liberalism in a British world context. It argues, contrary to the common perception, that Britishness and the British connection were fundamental to liberal visions of Canada and indeed to the historical development of Canadian liberal ideologies.[53] It is not merely that Canadian liberalism was influenced by the British "colonial legacy,"[54] that it was situated within a "transatlantic liberal universe,"[55] or that liberalism provided an overarching framework for a Canadian "project of rule."[56] Rather, historians should consider Anglo-Canadian liberalism as part of a broader liberal tradition that was adapted to, and contested in, local contexts across the British world. Second, it addresses a significant historiographical gap: the paucity of research on specifically Ontario liberalism during the 'Laurier era.' With rare exceptions historians have ignored Ontario, and Ontario liberalism in particular, as distinct subjects of post-Confederation history; a surprising omission given Ontario's significance as Canada's Anglophone heartland.[57] This reflects, perhaps, the decline of a distinctly Ontarian identity in the twentieth-century, the province's prominent position within Canada, and the tendency for British world historians, as Andrew Dilley notes, "to evade politics and the issue of power."[58] Regardless, while Upper Canadian liberals *as such* are central to histories of Confederation, studies of the Dominion-era tend to subsume Ontario liberalism into a broader

[53] "Visions," as Thomas Sowell notes, "are the foundations on which theories are built." Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), p. 4.
[54] Fierlbeck, *Political Thought in Canada*, ch. 3.
[55] Jeffrey McNairn, "Intellectual History, Liberalism, and the Liberal Order Framework," in *Liberalism and Hegemony*, p. 66.
[56] McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework," p. 621.
[57] Ontario's absence is conspicuous in both Hillmer and Chapnick (eds.), *Canadas of the Mind*, and Berger (ed.), *Contemporary Approaches to Canadian History*. Important exceptions include Peter Baskerville, *Sites of Power: A Concise History of Ontario* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2005); Robert Bothwell, *A Short History of Ontario* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1986); Gerald Craig, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years, 1784-1841* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2013 [1963]); Jane Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada: A Developing Colonial Ideology* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987); David Keane et al., (eds.), *Old Ontario: Essays in Honour of J.M.S. Careless* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1990); Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).
[58] Andrew Dilley, *Finance, Politics, and Imperialism: Australia, Canada, and the City of London, c. 1896-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 5.

national (or nationalist) narrative.[59] Neither has the relationship between Wilfrid Laurier - an architect and symbol of Canadian nation-building during the 'Age of Empire' - and his Ontario liberal contemporaries been effectively examined in a non-biographical format for many years.[60] Instead, historians focused on his position in Quebec, the 'appeasement' of Anglo-Canadian imperialism, and the bifurcation of the Liberal party along 'racial' lines between 1911 and 1917.[61] Indeed, we are accustomed to thinking crudely about Ontario as the epicentre of Anglo-Canadian jingoism,[62] and its capital, 'Tory' Toronto, as a bastion of Conservative imperialism.[63]

This thesis presents a different view, centred on a group of Anglophone liberal intellectuals who either resided in or originated from Ontario. These 'Greater Ontario' journalists and professors, pamphleteers and polemicists, were among the Dominion's most influential political commentators. Most traversed (with varying degrees of success) the line between 'public moralist' and political adviser - between the world of literature, ideas, and public persuasion, and the realm of strategy, power, and electoral politics.[64] 'Intellectual' is a convenient shorthand for individuals who made

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[59] On Upper Canadian liberalism, see especially J.M.S. Careless, *Brown of the Globe*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1959-63).

[60] The best introduction remains Berger (ed.), *Imperial Relations in the Age of Laurier*. See also Richard Clippingdale, *The Power of the Pen: The Politics, Nationalism, and Influence of Sir John Willison* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2012); Douglas Cole, "The Better Patriot: John S. Ewart and the Canadian Nation," Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Washington, 1968; Ramsay Cook, *The Politics of John W. Dafoe and the Free Press* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963); D.J. Hall, *Clifford Sifton*, 2 vols. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1981, 1985); Hillmer, *O.D. Skelton*; Frank Underhill, "Laurier and Blake, 1882-1891," *CHR* 20:4 (1939), pp. 392-408. For the 1891 and 1911 elections, see Patrice Dutil and David MacKenzie, *Canada 1911: The Decisive Election that Shaped the Country* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2011); Christopher Pennington, *The Destiny of Canada: Macdonald, Laurier, and the Election of 1891* (Toronto: Penguin, 2011).

[61] See for example Patrice Dutil, *Devil's Advocate: Godfroy Langlois and the Politics of Liberal progressivism in Laurier's Quebec* (Montreal: R. Davies, 1994); H. Blair Neatby, *Laurier and a Liberal Quebec: A Study in Political Management* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1973). The authoritative work in French is Réal Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier: quand la politique devient passion* (Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986). See also Réal Bélanger, "Laurier, Sir Wilfrid, in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, accessed 25 April 2016, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/laurier_wilfrid_14E.html.

[62] Mike O'Brien, "Manhood and the Militia Myth: Masculinity, Class and Militarism in Ontario, 1902-1914," *Labour* 42 (1998), pp. 115-141; Robert Teigrob, "Empire and Cultures of Militarism in Canada and the United States," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 43:1 (2013), pp. 32-7.

[63] Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 5. See also W.M. Baker, "A Case Study of Anti-Americanism in English-speaking Canada: The Election Campaign of 1911," *CHR* 51:4 (1970), pp. 426-49; R.D. Cuff, "The Toronto Eighteen and the Election of 1911," *Ontario History* 57:4 (1965), pp. 169-80; Ben Forster, "A Conservative Heart: The United Empire Club," *Ontario History* 78:2 (1986), pp. 83-104; Allan Levine, *Toronto: Biography of a City* (Madeira Park, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 2014), p. 140.

[64] Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 2-3.

their living with the printed word and sought to influence public opinion and government policy on issues of contemporary political concern.[65] More specifically, it focuses on a group of intellectuals who self-identified as liberals, supported the Canadian Liberal party, and were among Wilfrid Laurier's closest Anglo-Canadian allies from the 1880s-1919. Despite political, ideological, regional, and generational divisions they were united by a number of key traits: an intimate connection to Ontario, and southern Ontario - the former Upper Canada - in particular; almost all were protestants with the majority of Scottish or Irish ancestry; they admired and indentified with the British liberal tradition of W.E. Gladstone; and the majority - especially of the older generation - had direct links to Ontario's Victorian Liberal triumvirate of Edward Blake (1833-1912), George Brown (1818-1880), and Oliver Mowat (1820-1903). In this respect, we can identify a distinct ideological tradition based on Michael Freeden's definition of political ideologies as "clusters of ideas, beliefs, opinions, values, and attitudes usually held by identifiable groups, that...endeavour to uphold, justify, change or criticize the social and political arrangements of a state or other political community."[66]

The analysis examines the ideas and arguments of these intellectuals, reframing Anglo-Canadian liberalism in global and local contexts while recovering the variety of political languages in which 'Greater Ontario' liberals imagined Canada as a 'British nation.'[67] It further outlines the historical development of a distinctly Ontarian liberal tradition into the early-twentieth century; highlights the disputes amongst Anglo-Canadian liberals that shaped the fortunes of Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal party; and outlines how competing liberal visions of 'the Dominion' reflected widespread normative assumptions about the British character of Canadian nationality. This builds on Buckner's critique of the Nationalist interpretation while departing from it in two respects. First, it employs Carl Berger's definition of 'imperialism.' Second, as to the majority of liberals who favoured a

[65] For 'intellectual,' see Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), part 1. In Canada, see Nelson Wiseman (ed.), *The Public Intellectual in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), especially ch. 5.

[66] Michael Freeden, "Ideology, Political Theory and Political Philosophy," in Gerald Gaus and Chandran Kukathas (eds.), *Handbook of Political Theory* (London: Sage, 2004), p. 6.

[67] For 'British-American' identity in colonial Upper Canada, see Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada*, pp. 3-54, 166-92.

decentralised British connection, it employs the term 'autonomists' - a semantic shift that emphasises an expansive conception of Britishness.[68] This illuminates three facets of Anglo-Canadian liberalism for which historians have largely failed to account. First, that there were indeed liberal imperialists, but that these liberals, clustered in Toronto and around the Round Table movement, represented *continuing* strands of Ontario liberalism.[69] Second, that even radical liberal autonomists whose vision of Canada was continental and anti-imperial deployed languages of Britishness to bolster their political arguments. As Quentin Skinner has argued, "All revolutionaries are to this extent obliged to march backwards...To legitimise their conduct...they have no option but to show that at least some of the terms used by their ideological opponents...can be applied to include and thus to legitimise their own seemingly questionable behaviour."[70] Finally, and most important, its focus on 'Britishness,' 'Britannic nationalism,' and 'Dominion nation-building' emphasises the extent to which liberals and their ideological and political opponents agreed that Canada was, or was becoming, a 'British nation' in North America.

IV

The analysis proceeds on the basis of a contextualist approach to the history of political thought. Its methodological underpinning is premised on the notion that we must situate texts and utterances within their historical contexts to recover the meaning(s) and intention(s) of the author(s). As Pocock writes:

> Historians of this school look upon the political literature of any period as...articulations performed by authors in the language or diversity of languages available to them. These languages have histories...[and] can be termed the primary 'context' in which texts and debates happen in history. There are of course further contexts, the political, religious, social, and historical situations in which authors and their publics were situated[.][71]

[68] See Cole, "John S. Ewart," pp. 62-73.
[69] See also H.C.G. Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists: The Ideas and Politics of a post-Gladstonian Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); Tod Moore, "Liberal Imperialism in Australian Political Thought, 1902-14," *JICH* 43:1 (2015), pp. 58-79.
[70] Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, pp. 149-50.
[71] Pocock, "Theory in History," p. 168. See also Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, pp. 57-89.

The analysis thus regards political arguments as acts of ideological persuasion calibrated to resonate in particular contexts, articulated in available and understood languages, and deployed with the intent to influence debates over Canada's development. The key element of this approach is sensitivity to the political context. It is premised on the belief that a study of how liberal intellectuals perceived Laurier and his political programme can elucidate the ideological contours of their debates as well as a new perspective on the politics of the 'Laurier era.' This involves a close reading of the political literature of the period: books, articles, pamphlets, newspapers, and speeches. But published material, though significant for its public character, was only part of the debate. The study further draws on extensive archival and manuscript evidence, including the personal correspondence of its protagonists. These sources are critical to a full and nuanced reconstruction of historical contexts as they reveal the private sentiments, inter-personal relationships, and motivations which are not apparent or explicit in public material.

The examination of these sources leans on two key works of global and imperial history: James Belich's *Replenishing the Earth* (2009) and John Darwin's *The Empire Project* (2009). From the former it employs the concepts of 'explosive colonisation' and 'recolonisation' to explain Ontario's central role as the progenitor of a 'Greater Ontario' of western settlement and the lynchpin of Anglo-Canada's cultural and economic (re)integration within Greater Britain. As Belich writes, "Recolonization...meant that the Anglo Settler Revolution was not only a massive expansion but also a process of reintegration. Colonizing forces exploded outward with unprecedented velocity...[but] were then reeled back, re-secured firmly to the metropolis by recolonization."[72] It also uses the concept of the 'Anglo-world' to illustrate that Britishness was compatible with broader Anglo-Saxonist ideologies and identities that included the United States.[73] From the latter it draws the term 'Greater Ontario' as well as a political framework that places Wilfrid Laurier and Ontario liberalism at the centre of Canadian debates over Dominion nation-building. As Darwin writes:

[72] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 179-80.
[73] Ibid., pp. 9, 49-70, 406-18, 456-73.

> Ontario was the heartland of Britannic nationalism which was rooted in the province's Liberal and protestant ethos...Ontario politicians and publicists...were adamant that British values must prevail in Ontario, and Ontario values in Canada...And nowhere did the Britannic programme strike a louder chord than in Toronto...[which] aspired to be the true capital of a modern, progressive (and therefore British) Canada.[74]

Taken together, these works reveal the potential for re-evaluating Ontario liberalism and raise new questions about how Anglo-Canadians viewed Confederation, the British connection, and Dominion nation-building which this dissertation seeks to address.

Important limitations and delimitations, however, must be acknowledged. This thesis makes no attempt to arrive at a neutral or objective definition of liberalism - an effort fraught with methodological dangers.[75] Neither does it address political issues of a purely provincial nature or include every individual that might be counted as a 'Greater Ontario' liberal.[76] Such an ambitious and unwieldy investigation is beyond the capacity of this work. For this reason, as noted above, the analysis is delimited by its concentration on a specific group of liberal intellectuals. Its chronology is similarly restricted to the 'Laurier era' - the years between 1887 and 1919 when Wilfrid Laurier led the Canadian Liberal party. His ascent to the leadership opened a new period in Canadian politics, while the end of the Great War and the onset of the 'inter-war years' - marked by Laurier's death in early 1919 - provides a natural break. The political realignment of the 1920s, both in terms of Canadian domestic politics and the inauguration of the 'Third British Empire,' requires separate treatment. Finally, the choice of a thematic and analytical rather than narrative approach necessarily imparts a certain delimitation. Though the study seeks to trace the evolution of political thought over time, it regards a thematic analysis as the most effective way to examine the contested political and ideological terrain of Ontario's empire.

Further limitations reflect the nature of the sources, the scope of the study, and the inadequacies of the historian. First is the sheer overabundance of potential evidence. Voluminous

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[74] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 154.
[75] See especially Bell, "What is Liberalism?" pp. 682-715; Freeden and Stears, "Liberalism," pp. 329-48.
[76] Such a study would include Ontario politicians like George Ross (1841-1914) and Newton Rowell (1867-1941), and might embrace the Western Canadian socialist J.S. Woodsworth (1874-1942) and Anglo-Montreal's 'progressive' conservative Stephen Leacock (1869-1944).

archives, copious published works, and daily newspapers provide ample sources, yet it would be impossible to consult, let alone include, more than a fraction of what exists. The dissertation's broad thematic approach combined with its focus on a specific group of intellectuals presented a further challenge. While some archive collections are organised chronologically others are sorted by correspondent; the latter was more congenial to the purposes of this dissertation, though the former is conducive to the discovery of documents related to specific events or chronologies. Inevitably, documents and writings have been overlooked and excluded, though it is judged unlikely that these would affect the overall thrust of the argument. Logistical, financial, and time restrictions, as well as the subject of the thesis, imposed a 'hierarchy of needs' on the archives consulted. Though the study situates 'Greater Ontario' liberals in an imperial context its does not assess in detail the networks that comprised the British world. A genuinely comparative or networked analysis would require a thorough investigation of additional British, Antipodean, and other sources. Finally, the rich Francophone historiography of Quebec and French Canada - and with rare exceptions primary documents composed in French - are beyond the immediate concerns of this study. It is for this reason a primarily Anglo-Canadian history.

V

The thesis makes three principal and interwoven arguments. First and most fundamental, that liberal intellectuals envisaged the Dominion of Canada as 'British America' - connected to, but distinct from, the other constituent states of Greater Britain and the Anglo-world. Their conceptions of Britannic nationalism were thus articulated and debated in political languages that reflected their North American and 'Greater Ontarian' contexts. Second, that their varied notions of liberalism consequently shaped competing visions of the Dominion and its place in the British Empire. And third, that their debates illuminate the political, ideological, and regional fault lines that underpinned the rise and disintegration of Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal party in Anglophone Canada.

The study is roughly divided into two parts. The first establishes the distinct Ontarian liberal vision of Canada. Chapter one frames the dissertation, introducing Ontario's peculiar liberal tradition, establishing the significance of some of the intellectuals and politicians at the centre of the analysis, and outlining the shifting political context of the 'Laurier era.' Chapter two delves into Canada's relation to the wider British and Anglo-worlds. It shows that competing visions of Canada's future - imperial federalism, continental union, and independence - were underpinned by British and Anglo-Saxonist assumptions about Canadian identity. It argues that 'Britishness' was integral to liberal perceptions of Canada's difference from the United States, that 'Americanism' distinguished Canadians from Great Britain, and that visions of Greater British unity were surprisingly popular and durable among Anglo-Canadian liberals. Chapter three examines ideas of French-Canada's place in Confederation and Greater Britain. Most Anglo-Canadians hoped that Laurier could reconcile Quebec to its predominantly Anglo Dominion, continent, and empire, and that French-Canadians might subscribe to a common Britannic nationalism. But notions of Britishness and Anglo-Saxonism also sustained conceptions of Canada as an Anglo-protestant nation with a French-Catholic province - as opposed to a hyphenated 'Anglo-French' nation - undermining Laurier's attempts at racial conciliation. This leads to chapter four, which outlines how liberals viewed the Prairie West as an Ontarian empire - a 'neo-Ontario' of Anglo settlement and British institutions - and rebuked Laurier when he departed from this vision. However, as Western Canada developed new debates emerged over non-Anglo immigration and the West's uncertain attachment to the Dominion and the British Empire.

The second half turns to broader political and ideological debates. Chapter five focuses on the long-standing association between liberalism and free(r) trade. It maintains that the 'reciprocity' elections of 1891 and 1911, as well as the 'British preference' announced by Laurier in 1897, should be seen in the context of broader Anglo-world debates over free trade and protectionism. It further argues that while most liberal intellectuals supported freer continental trade this was not a rejection of Britishness or the British connection. Chapter six advances a similar claim about international and

imperial relations. It situates Canada in relation to Anglo-American imperial expansion and argues that most liberal intellectuals and politicians favoured the common defence of Greater Britain, an Anglo-alliance with the United States, and the assertion of Canada's distinct brand of Britannic nationalism in international relations. Their disputes thus hinged on whether Canada's 'British-American' interests were best served through imperial integration or Dominion autonomy and a 'Britannic alliance.' Chapter seven turns to liberal arguments over the connection between Dominion nation-building and ideas of 'progress.' Though Canada was imagined as a 'better Britain,' gross political patronage and corruption, anxiety over Ontario's rapid industrialisation, and unflattering comparisons to other Anglo-world democracies challenged this conceit. As Ontario liberals embraced the new ideas of Anglo-American 'progressives,' Wilfrid Laurier's commitment to Gladstonian liberalism appeared increasingly anachronistic. Chapter eight then explores the climax of Britannic nationalism and Dominion nation-building: the Great War. It shows that the concentric motivations to defend Britain, assert Canadian identity, and promote liberal ideals concealed deep political and ideological divisions that re-emerged when Laurier refused to support conscription. Most 'Greater Ontario' liberals rallied to the newly-formed Union Government despite the opposition of Quebec, apparently valuing pan-Britannic solidarity over Canadian national unity. Even dissenters, however, claimed to represent 'true' British liberal principles. Finally, the conclusion summarises the central arguments of the dissertation and looks forward to the political developments in the war's aftermath.

1

Wilfrid Laurier and Ontario Liberalism

"Ontario, formerly Upper Canada...was the nucleus and is the core of the Confederation."[1]
- Goldwin Smith, 1891

When Sir Wilfrid Laurier reminisced on his early years as the leader of Canada's Liberal party, he recalled that "my friends in Ontario were few and far between."[2] Late-Victorian Ontario was as Goldwin Smith described it: "the land of Scotch Presbyterians, Irish Orangemen, and ultra-British sentiment."[3] Indeed, the former Upper Canada was ardently British, Anglo-Saxon, and protestant - even by the "traditionally and aggressively British" standards of Anglophone Canada.[4] The provincial capital, the 'Queen City' of Toronto, centred the highest concentration of Orange lodges in the British world,[5] and at the height of the sectarian and racial tensions of the 1880s the province was inhospitable to "a Frenchman, a Roman Catholic and a citizen of Quebec."[6] By 1917 seemingly little had changed. Anglo-Canadians, led by Ontario, rallied to defend the British Empire in the Great War and imposed military conscription over the objections of Laurier and Quebec, realising his great fear of "a cleavage between [the] French and British races."[7] When Laurier died soon afterward, biographer O.D. Skelton (1878-1941) immortalised his stand against imperial, Anglo-Saxon Ontario.[8]

Yet these bookends distort our view of Laurier's standing in Anglophone Canada. As Prime Minister for fifteen years and the leader of Canadian Liberalism for a generation his political success depended on electoral and ideological support in Ontario and the Prairie West as well as Quebec. In fact, despite its Loyalist heritage and the power of the Orange Order, late-nineteenth-century

[1] Goldwin Smith, *Canada and the Canadian Question* (London: Macmillan, 1891), p. 24.
[2] LP/C-882/162097, Laurier to Gregory (copy), 23 November 1909.
[3] Goldwin Smith, "The Political Destiny of Canada," *Fortnightly Review* 124 (1877), p. 433.
[4] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 73.
[5] William Smyth, *Toronto, the Belfast of Canada: The Orange Order and the Shaping of Municipal Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), p. 19.
[6] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 176.
[7] Quoted in Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 495.
[8] Ibid., pp. 506-55.

Ontario was the heartland of British-American liberalism.[9] And as the Conscription Crisis later proved, a "'solid Liberal' Quebec" was an insufficient condition for a Liberal Government at Ottawa.[10] Canadian political historians, however, have tended to explain Laurier's appeal to Ontario in terms of a "compromise with English-Canadian Imperial sentiment,"[11] or a cynical embrace of John A. Macdonald's 'National Policy.'[12] There is a tendency, therefore, to regard Ontario liberalism as a nineteenth-century ideology incidental to, and extinguished by, the 'Laurier era.' Paul Romney, for instance, argued that Laurier's victory in 1896 marked "the demise" of Ontario's "Reform tradition,"[13] while J.M.S. Careless saw Laurier's alliance with Ontario liberals as an "ironical byproduct" of a Quebec-dominated government.[14] As Brown and Cook write: "Plainly Laurier's new liberalism was in the process of shedding much of its...heritage as it moved to fill that centre position in the political spectrum so long occupied by Macdonald's Conservatives."[15]

Undoubtedly, Laurier conciliated Anglo-Canadian opinion in the pursuit of national unity. "Remember this," he wrote to an Ontario liberal friend, "that in politics, the question seldom arises to do the ideal right...My object is to consolidate Confederation, and to bring our people long estranged from each other, gradually to become a nation...Everything else is subordinate to that idea."[16] But the arguments above downplay the importance of Laurier's political and ideological affinity with 'Greater Ontario' liberals into the twentieth-century. This chapter, therefore, explores his association with Ontario liberalism and traces some of its lineages. It sets the context for the analysis that follows by delineating Ontario liberal ideology, introducing key liberal intellectuals, and

[9] Bothwell, *Ontario*, ch. 4. For Atlantic Canadian Liberalism, see K.M. McLaughlin, "W.S. Fielding and the Liberal Party in Nova Scotia, 1891-1896," *Acadiensis* 3:2 (1974), pp. 65-79.
[10] Neatby, *Laurier*, p. 12.
[11] Ibid., p. 219.
[12] Donald Creighton, *Canada's First Century* (Don Mills, On; Oxford University Press, 2012 [1970]), pp. 83, 85; Frank Underhill, "The Development of National Political Parties in Canada," *CHR* 16:4 (1935), pp. 384-5.
[13] Paul Romney, *Getting in Wrong: How Canadians Forgot Their Past and Imperilled Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 182.
[14] J.M.S. Careless, *Colony to Nation: A History of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977 [1946]).
[15] Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, p. 10.
[16] WP/24/179/18061-2, Laurier to Gregory (copy), 11 November 1904.

sketching the political trajectory of Laurier's Liberal party. Though cursory, it identifies the contested but broadly coherent Ontario liberal inflection to debates over Dominion nation-building.

Ideological origins

I

Ontario Liberals, or 'Reformers,' traced their political and ideological lineage to the Upper Canadian agitators for Responsible Government.[17] Under the United Province of Canada (1841-1867) - the union of Ontario and Quebec that resulted from the 1837 rebellions and attained Responsible Government in 1848 - recognisable political factions emerged. Ontario Tories, Anglo-Montreal elites, conservative French-Canadian *Bleus*, and even moderate Reformers supported Sir John A. Macdonald (1815-1891) in the United Province and later the Dominion. In opposition, Ontario's radical Reformers aligned loosely with Quebec's anti-clerical *Parti Rouge*.[18] The radicals - a minority in the United Province but the largest group in Ontario - were comprised primarily by the Presbyterian 'Clear Grits' of the agrarian western peninsula bounded by Lakes Erie, Huron, and Ontario. The 'Grits,' led by George Brown and his Toronto *Globe*, adapted British and American radicalism to the Upper Canadian frontier with a programme of local democracy, egalitarianism, free trade, and the separation of church and state.[19] They also reflected the Anglo-Saxonist, anti-Catholic, and anti-French prejudices that so often animated nineteenth-century Britishness.[20]

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[17] Errington, *Upper Canada*, pp. 93-6; Edward Kylie, "Constitutional Development, 1840-1867," in Adam Shortt and Arthur Doughty (eds.) *Canada and its Provinces: A History of the Canadian People and their Institutions by One Hundred Associates* (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Co., 1914), pp. 105-62; Adam Shortt, *Lord Sydenham* (Toronto: Morang, 1908); George Wrong, *The Earl of Elgin* (London: Methuen & Co., 1905).

[18] See especially J.M.S. Careless, *The Union of the Canadas: The Growth of Canadian Institutions, 1841-1857* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1968).

[19] Michael Vance, "Scottish Chartism in Canada West?: An Examination of the 'Clear Grit' Reformers," *International Review of Scottish Studies* 22 (1997), pp. 56-104. Underhill argues Grittism was fundamentally 'American' in Frank Underhill, "Some Reflections on the Liberal Tradition in Canada: Presidential Address," *RCHA* 25:1 (1946), pp. 5-17.

[20] Cecil Houston and William Smyth, "The Orange Order and the expansion of the frontier in Ontario, 1830-1900," *Journal of Historical Geography* 4:3 (1978), pp. 251-64; J.R. Miller, "Anti-Catholic Thought in Victorian Canada," *CHR* 67:4 (1985), pp. 474-94.

During the 1830s-'60s Ontario boomed. Anglo settlers and British capital flooded the province which - at close to a one million people - surpassed Quebec's population in 1851.[21] This reinforced Reform demands for representation by population ('rep by pop') and 'Home Rule' for Ontario - a popular argument with farmers who believed that the United Province and its embryonic 'Macdonald system' favoured Quebec.[22] As J.M.S. Careless explained, this was perceived as

> Lower Canadian domination: the baneful consequence of a union based on equal parliamentary representation, which prevented the more populous Upper Canada from exercising its proper weight of numbers...[and] imposed high tariffs...railway bills, separate [Catholic] school measures - and always the reign of extravagance and venality - on an Upper Canadian majority in complete defiance of its will.[23]

The Reformers' primary object thus became the liberation of Ontario from French-Canadian domination. The divorce of the Canadas within a wider British North American federation, argued George Brown, would entrench local self-government, conceive a new "British American Nationality," and maintain Ontario's "connection with the...British Empire intact and unimpaired."[24] Most important, the *Globe* declared: "when the federation of all the British American provinces does come it may be formed with Upper Canada as the central figure[.]"[25]

With Confederation in 1867 Brown hoped to command the great North-West territories that he envisioned as an empire of settlement for western Ontario's farmers. At its grandest, this liberal vision of Dominion nation-building envisaged Toronto as a future commercial rival to Montréal and the metropolis of a virtual province - a 'Greater Ontario' connected by rail and stretching beyond Lake Superior across the western prairies.[26] Yet Brown, as historian Robert Bothwell notes, "sometimes confused the interests of a particular group of Torontonians with those of Upper Canada

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[21] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 279-94; Bothwell, *Ontario*, pp. 52-3, 63.
[22] Ged Martin, *Britain and the Origins of Canadian Confederation, 1837-67* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 47-50.
[23] Careless, *Brown*, II, p. 9.
[24] Frank Underhill, "Canada's Relations with the Empire as seen by the Toronto Globe, 1857-1867," *CHR* 10:2 (1929), pp. 127-8.
[25] Careless, *Brown*, II, p. 111.
[26] Frank Underhill, "Some Aspects of Upper Canadian Radical Opinion in the Decade before Confederation," *RCHA* 6:1 (1927), pp. 51-4.

as a whole."[27] Ontario's Grit farmers, in short, did not always agree with their metropolitan leaders at Toronto. Moreover, though Ontario liberals were nominally united by free trade and 'provincial rights' - an expansive conception of provincial legislative autonomy within Confederation[28] - the *Globe*'s radicalism repelled moderate liberals, especially in eastern Ontario and the province's urban centres, who congealed into a 'Whig' faction associated with Edward Blake and Oliver Mowat.[29] Neither did the *Globe*'s Ontarian provincialism and staunch partisanship appeal to an idealistic group of intellectuals who sought to "foster a national spirit, which formerly, in the Canadian sense, had not existed."[30] In the 1870s a new political movement emerged: Canada First.

Like the Grits and the Whigs, most Canada Firsters envisioned an Ontario, even Toronto-centric Dominion shaped by the colonisation of the North-West and enduring membership of the British Empire. But Canada First was beset by ideological divisions and its leaders disagreed whether it was Liberal, non-partisan, or a nascent third party; free trade or protectionist; or for independence or imperial federalism.[31] These divisions were evident after Edward Blake, mooted as a potential Canada First leader, spoke at Aurora, Ontario in 1874 where he envisioned "the future of Canada as a distinct State, the representative of British power on this continent," and suggested that "an effort should be made to reorganize the Empire upon a Federal basis."[32] This declaration was seen as an attack on the Liberal party and the Gladstonian policy of colonial autonomy.[33] At the same time, Goldwin Smith (1823-1910), the English liberal historian and polemicist, arrived in Toronto, joined

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[27] Bothwell, *Ontario*, p. 60.
[28] See especially Christopher Armstrong, *The Politics of Federalism: Ontario's Relations with the Federal Government, 1867-1942* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), ch. 1.
[29] Underhill, "Some Reflections on the Liberal Tradition," p. 13; Underhill, "Some Aspects of Upper Canadian Radical Opinion," p. 47-8.
[30] George Denison, *The Struggle for Imperial Unity: Recollections & Experiences* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1909), p. 16. See William Canniff, *Canadian Nationality: Its Growth and Development* (Toronto: Hart & Rawlinson, 1875); W.A. Foster, *Canada First, or, Our New Nationality: An Address* (Toronto: Adam, Stevenson & Co., 1871).
[31] W.L. Morton, *The Critical Years: The Union of British North America 1853-1873* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1964), p. 265.
[32] Edward Blake, *A National Sentiment! Speech of Hon. Edward Blake at Aurora* (Ottawa: E.A. Perry, 1874), pp. 8-9.
[33] Richard Cartwright, *Reminiscences* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912), pp. 147-52; Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 74-9.

Canada First, and reiterated his longstanding support for colonial independence.[34] In response Brown attacked Smith's revolutionary doctrine with "characteristic ardour",[35] yet he equally dismissed imperial federalism as "interesting and harmless speculation."[36] Brown's autonomist position was to

> deny that the introduction of the Federal principle...between all the British American Provinces, is in any sense a step towards independence...Yet the day may come when the United Provinces shall have so increased in population, in wealth and in influence...[that] we shall...pass at once, without any violent change in our institutions from the condition of dependent colonies to that of an independent nation.[37]

Canada First disintegrated under Brown's withering assault. Blake retreated to Liberal orthodoxy, Smith into annexationism, and what remained of the movement embraced imperial federalism.[38] For the moment, however, it is sufficient to note that Ontario liberalism consisted of three main ideological strands prior to the 'Laurier era': an idealistic Canada First nationalism, a moderate or Whig reformism, and the dominant tradition of agrarian Grit radicalism. But the dominant figure was undoubtedly George Brown: "a statesman in scope and vision, an unwavering champion of British connection and British institutions, and in his life and achievements are set deep the roots of Canadian Liberalism."[39]

Laurier Liberals

I

With Brown's death in 1880 Ontario liberalism lost its ideological leader. Though Oliver Mowat was ensconced as Ontario's Liberal premier, Edward Blake, the Liberal leader at Ottawa, struggled to appease Grit radicals. Meanwhile, Wilfrid Laurier, his French-Canadian lieutenant, dealt with the

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[34] Goldwin Smith, *An Address Delivered at the Dinner of the Committee and Stockholders of the 'National Club'* (Toronto: W.G. Gibson, 1874).
[35] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 74.
[36] Quoted in Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 75.
[37] Quoted in Underhill, "Canada's Relations with the Empire," pp. 127-8.
[38] Smith, "The Political Destiny of Canada," pp. 431-59; Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 74-9. See especially D.R. Farrell, "The Canada First Movement and Canadian Political Thought," *JCS* 4:4 (1969), pp. 16-26.
[39] John Willison, *Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal Party: A Political History*, I, (London: John Murray, 1903), p. 26.

miserable state of Liberalism in Quebec.[40] Sir John Macdonald, returned to office in 1878, exploited Liberal divisions to entrench his 'National Policy' of railroad construction, western colonisation, and high tariffs to protect central Canadian manufacturing.[41] After repeated election defeats Blake resigned in 1887 and installed Laurier as his successor over the doubts of his divided Ontario caucus. As Liberal journalist John Dafoe recalled:

> Laurier's accession to leadership caused doubt and heart-burnings among the leaders of Ontario Liberalism. Still under the influence of the Geo[rge] Brown tradition of suspicion of Quebec they felt uneasy at the transfer of the sceptre to Laurier, French by inheritance, Catholic in religion, with a political experience derived from...a province which was to them an un-known world.[42]

But Wilfrid Laurier was uniquely suited to placate Ontario liberals. Effortlessly bilingual, he learnt English in New Glasgow, Quebec and studied law at the Anglo bastion of McGill University in Montréal.[43] Though he initially opposed Confederation - worried about Anglo domination of Quebec[44] - he endorsed George Brown's vision of a "Federal union of the British American provinces."[45] By the 1880s, Laurier was distinguished in Quebec for his defence of British liberalism and provincial rights.[46] Federalism and British institutions, he argued, guaranteed French-Canadian liberties within Confederation and the British Empire. In Ontario, however, Laurier's battles against clerical and radical *rouge* opponents were practically unknown, and he recognised the imperative to instill "confidence in the minds of the Liberals of Ontario."[47]

To this end, he enlisted John Willison (1856-1927), a young Ontario journalist who with Laurier's recommendation became editor of the Toronto *Globe* in 1890.[48] Born in 1856 in Huron County, Willison was from Ontario's Grit heartland. Though he possessed no secondary education, the avid reader of the *Globe* and self-described "democrat, free trader and...moderate social radical"

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[40] Skelton, *Laurier*, I, pp. 222-7, 240-2; John Willison, *Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal Party: A Political History*, II, (London: John Murray, 1903), pp. 1-13; Underhill, "Laurier and Blake," pp. 393-9.
[41] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 23; Skelton, *Laurier,* I, pp. 337-49; Willison, *Laurier*, II, p. 17.
[42] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 31.
[43] WP/24/179/17960-69, Laurier to Willison, 8 November 1901.
[44] Willison, *Laurier*, I, pp. 112-19.
[45] Wilfrid Laurier, "Mr. Laurier before the people of Ontario," pp. 443-4.
[46] Laurier, "Political Liberalism," *Laurier on the Platform*, pp. 51-80.
[47] WP/24/179/17696, Laurier to Willison, 4 July 1890; LP/C-788/59891, Willison to Laurier, 11 November 1901.
[48] LP/C-738/1329, Willison to Laurier, 23 June 1890; WP, 24/179/17687, Laurier to Willison, 26 June 1890.

secured a position at the London, Ontario *Advertiser* in 1881.[49] By 1886 he was the *Globe*'s parliamentary correspondent at Ottawa where he quickly bonded with Laurier.[50] "If you could but talk to Ontario the liberalism you hold you would be the most popular politician in the country," he wrote to Laurier in 1889. "I think I can ensure you that in future the Globe will give you good services...believe me you have no more loyal follower."[51]

Willison's knowledge of Ontario opinion was critical, though his advice to "come to Ontario...[where] your presence will be of very great political advantage,"[52] was controversial in light of the province's "anti-French and anti-Catholic" prejudices.[53] But as Willison explained:

> Shortly after [Laurier] became leader I was his guest for a few days at his home...he revealed his knowledge of men and of books, his clarity and vigour of mind, his inflexibility of will and purpose. At least I thought I had discovered a man of very different quality from the amicable Laodicean whom many Liberals feared...had been installed in a position to which he was unequal.[54]

When Laurier agreed to speak at Toronto - over the objections of senior Ontario Liberals - Willison prepared for his address.[55] A profile in the *Globe*, soon reissued in a collection of Laurier's speeches, emphasised his British-American liberalism:

> [F]rom the pages of his favorite English volumes he has acquired a command of pure, strong, sympathetic English...the books of his heart are Shakespeare, Macaulay, the speeches of John Bright, and the few speeches and papers of Lincoln that have been preserved...On the walls are portraits of the late Hon. George Brown, Louis Joseph Papineau, Gladstone, Edward Blake, and other of the great leaders of Liberalism.[56]

Laurier's speech did not disappoint. Liberals, he maintained, had a duty to uphold "the idea of bringing together the various scattered British provinces and giving them a common national aspiration."[57] He rejected a narrow French-Canadian nationalism, invoked George Brown to assail

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[49] Quoted in Clippingdale, *Willison*, p. 38. See also A.H.U. Colquhoun, *Press, Politics and People: The Life and Letters of Sir John Willison* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1935), pp. 3-11; Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 55-60, 89, 113.
[50] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 113.
[51] LP/C-737/927, 930-31, Willison to Laurier, 17 June 1889.
[52] LP/C-737/991, Willison to Laurier, 26 July 1889.
[53] LP/C-737/1289, Willison to Laurier, 17 April 1890.
[54] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 162.
[55] LP/C-737/995-7, 1029-30, Willison to Laurier, 31 July and 20 August 1889; Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 169-70.
[56] John Willison, "Introduction: Mr. Laurier's Home," in *Laurier on the Platform*, pp. xii, xv, xix.
[57] Wilfrid Laurier, "Speech Delivered by Honorable Wilfrid Laurier, at Toronto, on the 30th September, 1889, at a meeting called by the Young Men's Liberal Club," in *Laurier on the Platform*, p. 539

the 'Macdonald system,' and concluded with a vision of Greater British and Anglo-world unity.[58] "Laurier's triumph," Willison later wrote, "was greater than appeared at the moment....I have heard Laurier declare that the [Toronto] meeting was the most severe ordeal of his public career...But he prevailed and never again in Ontario did the Liberal leader find an audience unwilling to receive his message[.]"[59]

II

But Laurier and the *Globe* were being pushed in an increasingly radical direction. A group of Ontario liberals led by Sir Richard Cartwright (1835-1912), Edward Farrer (1860?-1916), W.D. Gregory (1860-1939), and Goldwin Smith endorsed commercial and even political union with the United States.[60] Smith, their foremost ideologist, was born in Reading, England, educated at Eton and Oxford, and appointed Regius Professor of History in 1858.[61] A radical liberal of the 'Manchester School' he admired the American Republic and demanded that Britain 'emancipate' its settler colonies.[62] Initially he favoured Canadian independence, but "further inspection and reflection changed my view from independence to continental union."[63] Nonetheless, the 'Sage of Toronto' raised the tenor of Canada's political discourse.[64] He contributed to local publications including the *Bystander*, the *Week*, and the *Weekly Sun*; his books and articles were read across the Anglo-world; and his home, the Grange, became a centre for Toronto's professionals, intellectuals, and British and American

[58] Ibid., pp. 534-69.
[59] Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 172-4.
[60] Cartwright, *Reminiscences*, p. 27. See Carmen Cumming, "The Toronto Daily Mail, Edward Farrer, and the Question of Canadian-American Union," *JCS* 24:1 (1989), pp. 121-39; W.R. Graham, "Sir Richard Cartwright, Wilfrid Laurier, and Liberal Party Trade Policy, 1887," *CHR* 33:1 (1952), pp. 1-18.
[61] WP/38/293/28299, Smith to Willison, 29 September 1909.
[62] Goldwin Smith, *The Empire: A Series of Letters Published in 'The Daily News,' 1862, 1863* (Oxford: John Henry and James Parker, 1863), pp. 1-120; Goldwin Smith, "The Manchester School," *CR* 67 (1895), pp. 377-89.
[63] WP/38/293/28299, Smith to Willison, 29 September 1909.
[64] G.M. Grant, *Canada and the Canadian Question: A Review* (Toronto: C. Blackett Robinson, 1891), p. 3 and "Canada and the Empire," *The National Review* 27:161 (1896), p. 675.

visitors.[65] Though his acerbic critiques of imperialism, protectionism, and Confederation sharply divided contemporaries, even political opponents recognised "his really amazing powers."[66]

Laurier and Willison both admired Smith, but in the early 1890s they faced a quandary.[67] On one hand, the radical faction led by Smith and Cartwright skillfully advocated for continental free trade - a central tenet of liberal ideology and agrarian interest. On the other, Conservatives, imperial federalists, and, most damagingly, Whig liberals and old Canada Firsters worried that the Liberals had become 'soft' on annexation to the United States. Despite Laurier's assurance that "there is not a Grit who will be seduced from his allegiance to the Queen," many remained unconvinced.[68] Thus at the 1891 election Sir John Macdonald infamously assailed Liberal 'disloyalty' to the Dominion and the British Empire. Yet while Macdonald retained office the Liberals narrowly won Ontario's popular vote, captured their most constituencies in the province since 1874, and their Grit-inspired platform of free trade, provincial rights, and Dominion autonomy was roundly endorsed in the agrarian west.[69] "We were defeated," Willison told Laurier after the election, "but we did not do badly."[70] In fact, Laurier emerged with his position enhanced. As Willison wrote

> you have now a wonderfully enthusiastic following in Ontario...You are now in a preeminent sense the leader of the party, our people, and I know what I am talking about, are more than proud of the way you managed the campaign...I never knew the Liberals of this province in such grand shape.[71]

By the 1890s, Laurier had "completed the 'consolidation of his position'...[and] the Presbyterian Grits of Ontario were swearing by him."[72]

III

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[65] Bell, *Greater Britain*, ch. 7; Frank Underhill, "Goldwin Smith," *UTQ* 2:3 (1933), pp. 285-309; Elisabeth Wallace, *Goldwin Smith: Victorian Liberal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), chs. 4-5.
[66] WP/309/40/29587, E. Grigg to Willison, 6 May 1910; George Parkin, "True Imperialism," *UE* 2:12 (Dec 1911), p. 839.
[67] Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 70-1. Laurier was re-reading Smith's *The Empire* (1863) in 1908. WDGP/2/1908, Laurier to Gregory, 23 January 1908; LP/C-858/135378, Laurier to Gregory (copy), 23 January 1908.
[68] Laurier, "Mr. Laurier before the people of Ontario," p. 459.
[69] Ibid., pp. 253-5.
[70] LP/C-738/1669, Willison to Laurier, 11 March 1891.
[71] LP/C-738/1764-6, Willison to Laurier, 26 March 1891.
[72] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 34.

The 1891 election, however, also demonstrated the political limits of radicalism. Indeed, Macdonald's 'loyalty cry' swung the campaign because it resonated with Whig liberals who feared that continental free trade would end in political union with the United States. "If that is to be the policy of the Dominion Liberal party," warned Oliver Mowat, "I cease to be a member of it."[73] Laurier and Willison, then, sought to reassure moderate Ontario liberals of their commitment to a *British*-American nation. In this respect, Willison recalled, "no one gave me wiser counsel than Principal Grant of Queen's University."[74]

Reverend George Munro Grant (1835-1902) was born in Nova Scotia to Scottish highlander parents, attended the University of Glasgow, and advocated for Confederation upon his return to Halifax. His national reputation stemmed from an expedition across the Dominion with Sir Sandford Fleming (1827-1915) and the resulting book, *Ocean to Ocean* (1873), which lauded the potential of "the whole mainland of British America [united as] one political State under the aegis of the Empire."[75] Shortly thereafter he became principal of Queen's College in Kingston, Ontario and transformed the struggling Presbyterian institution into a modern university.[76] From Queen's he reigned as "the elder statesman of Canadian imperialism" through the 1890s, though historians usually err in identifying him as a 'conservative.'[77] Certainly, he espoused a "moral as opposed to economic" imperialism,[78] excoriated Goldwin Smith,[79] and supported Dominion, Imperial, and Anglo-Saxon unity.[80] But his views also reflected an Idealist ethos of civil and religious liberty.[81] Pragmatic and socially liberal, he reformed the Presbyterian Church, secularised Queen's University, advanced women's education, preached racial and religious tolerance, and - despite a wariness of

[73] LP/C-738/2042-3, Mowat to Laurier, 31 December 1891; Edward Blake, *Letter of the Hon. Edward Blake to the West Durham Reform Convention* (Toronto: Budget, 1891), p. 6.
[74] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 338.
[75] G.M. Grant, *Ocean to Ocean* (Toronto: James Campbell & Son, 1873), p. 6.
[76] T.R. Glover and D.D. Calvin, *A Corner of Empire: The Old Ontario Strand* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1937), pp. 164-71.
[77] Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, p. 137; Smith, *Canada - An American Nation?*, ch. 13
[78] Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 32.
[79] Grant, "Canada and the Empire," p. 676.
[80] G.M. Grant, *Imperial Federation: A Lecture Delivered in Victoria Hall, Winnipeg, on September 13th, 1889* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Free Press, 1890), and "Current Events," *QQ* 5:4 (1898), pp. 326-7.
[81] See G.M. Grant, "Thanksgiving and Retrospect," *QQ* 9:3 (1902), pp. 219-32; Adam Shortt, "Principal Grant," *QQ* 10:1 (1902), pp. 1-4.

industrialisation - retained faith in science and progress.[82] Politically, he idolised the Nova Scotian reformer Joseph Howe, supported Oliver Mowat, and, aside from 1891, supported freer trade and opposed Conservative corruption.[83] His liberal imperialist ideology, then, was a peculiarly Canada First combination of Whig, Presbyterian, and Idealist influences.[84]

Grant also headed two groups that increasingly shaped Ontario liberalism: the imperial federalist movement and the 'Queen's School' of political economy. In the former, he upheld Imperial Federation along with George Denison (1839-1925), a Toronto Canada Firster and United Empire Loyalist, and George Parkin (1846-1922), an Idealist educator and orator who shuttled between Oxford, New Brunswick, and Toronto promoting imperial unity.[85] But Grant departed from his imperialist contemporaries in both temperament and scholarship - characteristics that shaped Queen's as a liberal intellectual centre to rival Toronto.[86] By the mid-1890s, moreover, Grant mentored John Willison and criticised the governing Conservatives in a series of articles in the *Globe*.[87] In effect, he upheld what historian John Darwin has termed the 'Gladstonian model' of politics: "a progressive liberalism...governed (through its parliamentary institutions) by an enlightened public opinion."[88] While Laurier represented this 'Gladstonian' Britannic vision, the *Globe* transmitted its message across Ontario. "[Y]ou have succeeded in giving to the Globe a character which it never had before at any time," Laurier wrote to Willison in 1895, "and an authority which it never had since the days of George Brown."[89] As Grant put it: "You see, what hurt

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[82] D.B. Mack, "Grant, George Munro," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (2015). http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/grant_george_monro_13E.html. Accessed 12 February 2016.

[83] W.L. Grant and F. Hamilton, *Principal Grant* (Toronto: Morang, 1904), pp. 357-60; Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 102.

[84] See especially G.M. Grant, "Canada First," in G.M. Fairchild (ed.), *Canadian Leaves: A Series of New Papers read before the Canadian Club of New York* (New York: Napoleon Thompson, 1887), pp. 247-67.

[85] William Christian, *Parkin: Canada's Most Famous Forgotten Man* (Toronto: Blue Butterfly, 2008).

[86] Shortt, "Principal Grant," p. 2; Berger, *The Sense of Power*, pp. 12-22, 33-41; Cole, "Canada's 'nationalistic' imperialists," pp. 44-9; Barry Ferguson, *Remaking Liberalism: The Intellectual Legacy of Adam Shortt, O.D. Skelton, W.C. Clark and W.A. Mackintosh, 1890-1925* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), ch. 5

[87] *TG*, 4, 7, 11, and 21 November 1893; Grant and Hamilton, *Principal Grant*, pp. 348-54; LP/C-739/2682-3, Willison to Laurier, 13 November 1893.

[88] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 152.

[89] WP/24/179/17738, Laurier to Willison, 29 July 1895.

the Globe two or three or four years ago was that many of us thought there were occasional sneers at anything distinctively British or Canadian. All that is changed now, [and] I am thankful."[90]

Though Grant rebuffed suggestions that he might enter politics in Ontario alongside Laurier, he nonetheless shaped Willison's intellectual development and Liberal party policy.[91] As Willison recalled: "I think of no career in Canada which was more distinguished for simple and resolute patriotism...If he had been governed by personal ambition only he would have turned his back upon Queen's University, entered the federal Cabinet and stood foremost among the statesmen of the Empire."[92] But Grant's support illustrated an emerging Liberal 'consensus' under Laurier - a liberal programme that appealed to Grits and Whigs, autonomists and imperialists alike. Laurier's cultivation of Oliver Mowat, the stoutly loyal Ontario Premier who conciliated Roman Catholics and Conservatives yet maintained "in such peculiar degree the confidence of Presbyterian Liberals," reflected this broad coalition.[93] With endorsements from Mowat and Grant, even George Denison - the most belligerent and anti-American of Toronto imperialists - concluded that "if Laurier came into power now I think he, and his party, would be loyal and true to the Empire."[94] Indeed, Willison noted the importance of pacifying Denison, "because he represents an element that has been hostile to us in the main."[95]

There were, however, new sources of conflict. Long-simmering tensions over race, religion, and provincial rights found new expression over the Manitoba Schools Question discussed below.[96] At the same time, 'annexationists' argued that North American free trade was only achievable

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[90] WP/17/130/12196-7, G.M. Grant to Willison, 28 June 1895; GSP, M-2187, G.M. Grant to Smith, 17 January 1896.
[91] LP/C-740/3933-4, Willison to Laurier, 29 December 1895; WP/17/130/12202-4, G.M. Grant to Willison, 6 January 1896.
[92] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 339.
[93] Ibid., pp. 97-102, 150. See LP/C-740/4223a-d, Ewart to Laurier, 17 April 1896, and Laurier to Ewart (copy), 20 April 1896; EP/1/12-13, Laurier to Ewart, 20 April 1896, Ewart to Laurier (draft), 17 and 22 April 1896,
[94] GDP/7-8/2985, Denison to Salisbury (copy), 20 January 1896; 5-6/2078-9, 2172, 2419-20, Denison to Salisbury (copy), 19 December 1891, 7 May 1892, 12 August 1893.
[95] LP/C-742/6624, Willison to Sifton (draft), 17 August 1896.
[96] WP/24/179/17805-10, Laurier to Willison, 30 December 1895.

through political union with the United States.[97] Nonetheless, Willison reassured Laurier that in Ontario the "Liberals were never more united and Conservatives never more divided and lacking in enthusiasm."[98] In 1896 the Liberals swept to power on the basis of a moderate, liberal vision of Dominion nation-building that appealed to a broad swath of Ontario opinion. While George Denison pronounced himself "satisfied with our new Government,"[99] Goldwin Smith regarded Laurier's victory as inaugurating "a reign of lukewarm Liberalism with orthodox professions."[100] Of course, Quebec played a decisive role in the Liberal victory.[101] But Laurier's "government of strong men," including Manitoba's Clifford Sifton (1861-1929), Nova Scotia's W.S. Fielding (1848-1929), and Ontario's Oliver Mowat, represented a British-American Liberalism anchored in the Anglo provinces.[102] For Willison and Laurier, moreover, the Liberal victory was also a personal triumph. "You know that of all the congratulations you may have received none were more sincere than mine," Willison wrote the new Prime Minister.[103] "I can assure you," Laurier replied, "that I accept your congratulations in the very same spirit that they are sent to me. I know that I never had a more sincere friend than you[.]"[104]

Imperialism and its Discontents

I

The 1896 election marked the high point of Laurier's Liberal consensus in Anglophone Canada and historians broadly agree that it helped to secure Confederation.[105] The Manitoba Schools compromise, as we shall see, (briefly) alleviated racial tension while the Dominion's first French-

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[97] WDGP/12/E, [Goldwin Smith], *Our Best Policy: Issued by the Continental Union Association of Ontario* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose Co., 1895).
[98] LP/C-739/3393-4, Willison to Laurier, 29 November 1894.
[99] GDP/7-8/3136, Denison to Salisbury (copy), 15 December 1896.
[100] GSP/M-2187, Smith to Wilison (copy), 25 June 1896.
[101] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 252.
[102] LP/C-740/4667, Willison to Laurier, 25 June 1896; Skelton, *Laurier*, II, ch. 10.
[103] LP/C-740/4667, Willison to Laurier, 25 June 1896.
[104] WP/24/170/17794, Laurier to Willison, 29 June 1896.
[105] See John English, *The Decline of Politics: The Conservatives and the Party System, 1901-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993 [1977]), p. 11; Bothwell, *The Penguin History*, p. 249; Brown and Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921*, pp. 1-11; Careless, *Colony to Nation*, p. 420.

Canadian Prime Minister presided over an economic and demographic boom. Britannic nationalism soared, fuelled by Laurier's role at the 1897 Jubilee and Colonial Conference in London.[106] But while the Imperial spectacle advertised the apparent power of the late-Victorian British Empire, British leaders, anxious over the twin challenges of mass democracy and new geopolitical rivals, were suffering a concurrent "crisis of confidence in national supremacy."[107] In this context, the settler empire gained new significance and the suddenly-booming Canada, with its French-Canadian leader, received particular attention.[108] While in Britain Laurier was knighted, awarded honorary degrees from Oxford and Cambridge, and, in a personal highlight, met Gladstone at Hawarden.[109] As the New York *Times* reported: "Without a doubt the most conspicuous figure among all the notabilities...assembled in London was Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the Canadian Premier."[110] In Ontario, the political effect was immediate. "The First Minister of Canada," gushed the *Globe*, was "a man whose name now carries meaning in the remotest parts of the British Empire...[as] the exponent of the nationhood of Canada."[111] The Liberal party was even "popular in Toronto,"[112] where Laurier was received at Massey Hall with "spontaneous and explosive enthusiasm." "Sir John Macdonald himself," Willison later claimed, "never could have had a more tumultuous welcome in the Orange and Protestant stronghold of Canada."[113]

It was in this atmosphere that John Willison made his first trip to Britain. He was obviously enchanted by the "Old Country."[114] His articles in the *Globe* lauded Canada's membership of a great "Imperial commonwealth"[115] and "won wide praise" in Toronto.[116] "A Canadian," Willison asserted, "cannot be robbed of his full part in the great inheritance of British tradition and British valor and

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[106] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 59.
[107] Bell, *Greater Britain*, p. 2.
[108] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, pp. 70-71.
[109] Ibid., pp. 67-70, 78.
[110] New York *Times*, 29 August 1897.
[111] *TG*, 6 October 1897.
[112] WP/24/179/17827, Willison to Laurier (copy), 22 October 1897
[113] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 255.
[114] LP/C-749/14585, Willison to Laurier, 10 May 1897.
[115] *TG*, 4 October 1897.
[116] Clippingdale, *Willison*, p. 132.

British literature and British freedom."[117] This growing Britannic nationalism, however, remained decidedly liberal. Though the British Liberal party was "halting and stumbling" in the post-Gladstone era it was responsible for "so much that is for the glory of England."[118] His political outlook was also increasingly imperial. When Laurier addressed parliament upon Gladstone's death in 1898 Willison advised him: "Extend your speech...and have it brought out in book form in England...it would enhance your own reputation...[and] would be useful from both the Canadian and Imperial points of view."[119] The change was apparent to Clifford Sifton, who teased Willison over his new "ultra jingo ideas."[120] Nonetheless, he assured the Prime Minister that "notwithstanding our occasional very small differences of opinion...[my] positive devotion to yourself [has] never undergone any change."[121]

At the 1900 election, however, fought at the height of the South African War, Laurier was attacked by Ontario's largely pro-war, anti-Quebec Conservative press for his apparently insufficient imperial enthusiasm. The Liberals lost seats in the province even as they increased their parliamentary majority across the Dominion. "Ontario," Willison lamented to Laurier, "voted in blind ignorance,"[122] and he was determined to give "the English provinces a better idea" of Laurier's "achievements and character[.][123] The result was a biography, *Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal Party* (1903), that was predictably "kind [and] generous" to Laurier.[124] But the work also clearly demarcated the evolution of Willison's political thought. Still ardently liberal, he connected Laurier to the "great and luminous era of Gladstone" and the "golden age of Liberalism in Canada" under

[117] *TG*, 23 October 1897.
[118] *TG*, 13 October 1897.
[119] LP/C-757/24080-81, Willison to Laurier, 11 June 1898. See Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 26 May 1898; *TG*, 27 May 1898.
[120] WP/37/286/27392, Sifton to Willison, 7 February 1899.
[121] LP/C-786/57166, Willison to Laurier, 25 June 1901.
[122] LP/C-788/59890, Willison to Laurier, 11 November 1901.
[123] LP/C-802/75001, Willison to Laurier, 11 July 1903.
[124] WP, 24/179/17998, Laurier to Willison, 26 June 1903.

George Brown.[125] This was a claim to Ontario's liberal tradition as well as an assertion of its British-American provenance:

> No doubt the character of the Canadian [Liberal] party was determined in some measure by...British Liberalism. But it is hard to fit an old world policy to new world conditions, and since the great battle for responsible government was fought out both in the British Islands and in the North American Provinces, it can hardly be said that the Liberals of Canada and of Great Britain have had a common programme.[126]

Yet in the early-twentieth century Willison perceived "growth in Imperial unity" and identified Canadian Liberals with the imperialist wing of British Liberalism.[127] "To-day, it may be the Canadian Liberal party is more esteemed by Mr. Balfour...than by the official chiefs of British Liberalism...It would not be quite so if Lord Rosebery were restored...[he] peculiarly and pre-eminently typifies the newer imperial spirit of the Liberal party of Canada."[128]

II

In retrospect, it was clear to Willison that the "defeat of Laurier in Ontario in 1900 had long consequences."[129] Laurier, he wrote, "coveted the goodwill and the confidence of Ontario," but "believed in 1900 that he deserved a greater measure of support from Ontario than he received. Thenceforth he turned to his own Province and his own people. He never wooed Ontario again."[130] Willison's account, however, was only partly true. Though Laurier was under growing pressure in Quebec from French-Canadian *Nationalistes* led by Henri Bourassa (1868-1952), significant developments were also underway in Ontario.[131] Canada's participation in the South African War reanimated debates over its status in the British Empire while the 'Laurier boom' transformed the economic, demographic, and political character of the Dominion. In this context, ideological divisions among liberals re-emerged along new 'Greater Ontario' lines.

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[125] Willison, *Laurier*, I, pp. 2, 4-5.
[126] Ibid., pp. 1-2.
[127] Ibid., II, p. 306.
[128] Ibid., I, p. 2.
[129] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 307.
[130] Ibid.
[131] See Henri Bourassa, "The French-Canadian in the British Empire," *MR* 9 (1902), pp. 53-68.

In Toronto, which recolonisation was remaking into "a great city," these changes shaped the rise of liberal imperialism.[132] Liberal imperialists, historian H.C.G. Matthew seminally argued, were post-Gladstonian Liberals who supported an interventionist state and believed that "imperialism was progressive."[133] Though Matthew focused on the Liberal party at Westminster - most of whom remained free traders - liberal imperialist ideology more generally encompassed 'constructive imperialists' committed to tariff reform and Imperial union.[134] Moreover, as historian Jeanne Morefield argues, "idealist liberalism," which elevated 'organic' notions of national and racial unity over Gladstonian individualism, underpinned the new imperialism of the Round Table movement.[135] Similar developments were apparent in Australia where Melbourne-based liberals led the Round Table's Australian branch.[136] In the United States, too, there was a link between 'progressive' and imperial ideologies.[137]

This Anglo-world trend was apparent in Toronto, where by 1908 John Willison, George Wrong (1860-1948), B.E. Walker (1848-1924), and others centred the Canadian Round Table movement. Their common origins in 1880s Ontario liberalism and long residence in Toronto imparted their imperialism with a distinct inflection. Indeed, their common origins were illustrated by a notable connection: mutual friendship with, and admiration for, Goldwin Smith. As Wrong, the University of Toronto historian, wrote to Willison upon Smith's death: "You remember how...we used to listen for his words of wisdom. He was pure, high-minded, a little perverse, perhaps, but he was a real force among us for better things in politics."[138] This Ontario and particularly Toronto liberal genealogy distinguished liberal imperialists from the older generation of imperial federalists

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[132] WP/38/293/28284, Smith to Willison, 12 December 1908.
[133] Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists*, p. 38.
[134] Anthony Howe, *Free Trade and Liberal England, 1846-1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), chs. 6-7; Andrew Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, c. 1880-1932* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2000), ch. 4, and "Tariff Reform: An Imperial Strategy, 1903-1913," *HJ* 40:4 (1997), pp. 1033-54.
[135] Jeanne Morefield, *Covenants Without Swords: Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), and "'An Education to Greece': The Round Table, Imperial Theory and the Uses of History," *History of Political Thought* 28:2 (2007), pp. 328-61.
[136] Moore, "Liberal Imperialism," pp. 58-79.
[137] Bell, "Before the democratic peace," pp. 647-70; William E. Leuchtenburg, "Progressivism and Imperialism: The Progressive Movement and American Foreign Policy, 1898-1916," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 39:3 (1952), pp. 483-504.
[138] WP/50/344/36335-6, Wrong to Willison, 8 June 1910.

as well as contemporary imperialists elsewhere in the Dominion. McGill University's Andrew MacPhail (1864-1938) and Stephen Leacock (1869-1944), for example, represented Montreal's largely-Conservative Anglo minority and rarely collaborated with Toronto Liberals.[139] The 'Britannic idealism' of older intellectuals like G.M. Grant and George Parkin, furthermore, dovetailed with, rather than supplanted, liberal ideology.[140] Toronto's liberal imperialists, therefore, can be understood in terms of the ideological cross-pollination of Britannic idealism and Ontario liberalism.

This liberal imperialism was nourished by political, intellectual, and professional developments. Since the late-1890s John Willison had chafed at partisan journalism and in 1903 he left the *Globe* to edit the independent Toronto *News* in partnership with Conservative businessman Joseph Flavelle (1858-1939).[141] At the same time, his relations with Laurier deteriorated. Whereas Willison was enticed by 'constructive imperialism' Laurier rebuffed imperialist advances. Moreover, the 'explosive colonisation' of the Prairie West resurrected the old disputes over railways, separate Catholic schools, and provincial rights that had wrought Ontario liberalism in the nineteenth-century.[142] In this context, Laurier and Willison increasingly found themselves on opposite sides of significant domestic and imperial political questions. By 1905 their personal and professional relationship disintegrated.

Following their rupture, Willison made new connections in Dominion and imperial politics. First, he developed a partnership with Robert Borden (1854-1937), the new imperially-minded leader of the Conservative party whose progressive 1907 'Halifax Platform' gained Willison's approval.[143] Though he remained close to leading Liberals, this relationship solidified his growing Conservative ties.[144] Second, Willison forged close links with British imperialists including George

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[139] MacPhail was from P.E.I. and Leacock from Orillia, Ontario. See for example RTP/777/22-6, 29, 30-31, Curtis to Wrong (copy), 12 April 1912, Wrong to Curtis and Wrong to Malcolm, 22 May 1912; GWP/B2003-005/003/2/63, MacPhail to Wrong, 8 January 1913.
[140] Terry Cook, "George R. Parkin and the concept of Britannic Idealism," *JCS* 10:3 (1975), pp. 15-31.
[141] JFP/1/1902, Flavelle to Willison, 27 November 1902.
[142] WP/24/179/18044, Laurier to Willison, 7 June 1904.
[143] WP/4/32/2278-81, Willison to Borden (copy), 15 August 1907; R.C. Brown, *Robert Laid Borden: A Biography, Volume I: 1854-1914* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 132-5.
[144] Clippingdale, *Willison*, pp. 228-34.

Parkin's friends Leopold Amery, Lionel Curtis, and Alfred Milner.[145] After writing articles on Canada for the London *Morning Post* Willison contributed to the London *Times* and by 1910 was its Canadian Correspondent.[146] His "reputation as the ablest and most influential of Canadian pundits," combined with the moderate tone of his British articles, appealed to the *Times*.[147] As even Laurier admitted to Edward Grigg (1879-1955), the colonial editor of the *Times*:

> In selecting Willison you have chosen the man who, of all men in Canada, can best perform the work which is contemplated by the 'Times.' He is now a determined opponent of my government and will continue to fight it, I am sure, in his paper, the 'News' of Toronto. I have no doubt however but that he will faithfully carry out the work which the 'Times' has entrusted to him and which...has been most acceptable to all sections of Canadian opinion.[148]

By the 1910s, therefore, Willison was the senior Canadian in what historian Simon Potter has termed the "imperial press system."[149] Though his relations with Laurier never recovered, he "was welcomed to the centre of the Empire...as the principal Canadian colleague of the British imperialists."[150]

George Wrong and B.E. Walker similarly represented the 'recolonisation' of Toronto liberalism. Walker, born near Hamilton, Ontario, joined the Canadian Bank of Commerce - the chief Ontario and Liberal competitor to the Conservative-aligned Bank of Montréal - in 1868, becoming the bank's general manager in 1886 and president in 1907.[151] Under Walker the Bank of Commerce was Toronto's leading financial institution with interests in western expansion, the Grand Trunk railway, and privileged access to credit in the City of London.[152] As Toronto challenged Montréal as the Dominion's commercial capital, Walker, along with his Round Table colleague Arthur Glazebrook

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[145] WP/32/243/24144-5, Parkin to Willison, 12 July 1905, 11/85/7381-2, Curtis to Willison, 26 December 1909, 30 December 1909; 29/223/21851-3, Milner to Willison, 24 December 1909; AMP/79/diary, 23, 24, and 26 October 1908.
[146] WP/22/165/16428-9, Jebb to Willison, 3 October 1905; 47/324/34386, Ware to Willison, 27 December 1905; 40/309/29364, 29522, [Northcliffe] to Willison, 12 December 1908 and Bell to Willison, 24 January 1910.
[147] LP/C-885/165662, 65, E. Grigg to Laurier, 21 January 1910.
[148] LP/C-885/165668, Laurier to E. Grigg (copy), 6 February 1910; Clippingdale, *Willison*, p. 239.
[149] Potter, *News and the British World*.
[150] Clippingdale, *Willison*, p. 248.
[151] David Kimmel, "Walker, Sir Byron Edmund," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, online, accessed 3 March 2016, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/walker_byron_edmund_15E.html.
[152] Dilley, *Finance, Politics, and Imperialism*, pp. 114-33.

(1861-1940) - an English-born banker, exchange broker, and friend of Alfred Milner[153] - epitomised what historian Donald Creighton termed the city's "new Liberal plutocracy, the chief beneficiaries...of the Laurier prosperity...[who] voted Liberal as instinctively as they breathed[.]"[154] Walker's civic patronage - which included overseeing the expansion and reorganisation of the University of Toronto, the establishment of the Royal Ontario Museum, and the preservation of Goldwin Smith's home as the Art Gallery of Ontario - combined with his support for the Round Table, expressed a Toronto-centric Britannic nationalism.[155] "Toronto," he argued, "is the second largest city of our country; it is the largest of English speaking people. It is the educational centre. We want to show the Briton abroad what our material civilization amounts to...We do not always want to remain a wooden backwoods place with narrow provincial ideas. We aim to be cosmopolitan, to have a larger outlook."[156]

At the University of Toronto, historian George Wrong sought to instill that outlook. From Elgin County, along Ontario's Lake Erie shore, Wrong studied theology at Toronto's Wycliffe College and after a formative period at Oxford in 1892 was named lecturer and later chair of history at Toronto, a position he held for over thirty years.[157] During this period Wrong cultivated liberal intellectuals and politicians: Goldwin Smith was an early academic mentor and he met his "very old friend" Wilfrid Laurier through his father-in-law Edward Blake.[158] In later years, he tended connections with Robert Borden, James Bryce, and golf partner William H. Taft and believed, as historian R. Douglas Francis notes, "that scholars had a right to express opinions on current affairs in

[153] H.A.I., "Obituary: Arthur James Glazebrook," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 7:1 (1941), pp. 92-4.
[154] Creighton, *Canada's First Century*, pp. 124.
[155] BEWP/8/18, 39, Smith to Walker, 21 October 1909, 13 April 1910; WP/38/293/28288-91, Smith to Willison, 25 September 1909. See also Kimmel, "Walker, Sir Byron Edmund"; Levine, *Toronto*, p. 138-9.
[156] B.E. Walker, "A Comprehensive Plan for Toronto," *Addresses delivered before The Canadian Club of Toronto, season 1905-6* (Toronto: Warwick Bro's and Rutter, 1906), pp. 138-9.
[157] GWP/B2004-0010/001/15, diary, 1 April-12 October 1892; Berger, *Canadian History*, p. 8.
[158] GWP/B2005-005/003/2/45, Laurier to Wrong, 29 May 1912. For Smith see GWP/B2003/005/004/3/36.

order to guide public opinion....that a good intellectual should be a man of influence, holding a position to affect the decisions of politicians and businessmen."[159]

This attitude was reflected in his Historical Club, which introduced undergraduates to leading Torontonians, notably Flavelle, Walker, and Willison.[160] "It is a great privilege to be so closely in touch with the young life of the country," Wrong recorded. "I am afraid we are still a crude people but I really feel that some improvement is being made."[161] To this end, he emulated Oxford traditions and sent promising students to Balliol College, which he believed "gives a standing quite unique in the eyes of the world[.]"[162] Though he recognised that England's social hierarchies had no place in North America, he nonetheless lionised "the majestic traditions of the gray city on the Isis."[163] Balliol, moreover, was the centre of the Idealist, Anglo-Saxonist, and imperialist ideas that reshaped Anglophone liberalism in the nineteenth and early-twentieth-centuries.[164] Its Canadian connection was strengthened by George Parkin's stewardship of the Rhodes Scholarships and the establishment of the Beit chair in "Imperial and Colonial History."[165] Though Parkin and Sir William Osler (1848-1919), the Ontario-born Regius Professor of Medicine, failed to lure Wrong to Oxford,[166] their association was central to the "British academic world."[167] It also cultivated Britannic nationalism and liberal imperialism. "I wonder," Wrong wrote to Parkin,

> if the Rhodes Scholarship Trustees appreciate the political importance at the moment of getting our young Canadians imbued with the ideas of Oxford? During the years a vast change of attitude has come over this country. The tone of mind instead of being <u>colonial</u> has become <u>national</u>...so I say that

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[159] R. Douglas Francis, *Frank Underhill: Intellectual Provocateur* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), p. 14.

[160] WP/24/176/17374, Kylie to Willison, 5 October 1905, 50/344/36326,30,32, Wrong to Willison, 26 November 1904, 3 December 1907, 2 February [n.d.]; VMP/141/8, "Historical Club, University of Toronto, Provisional Programme 1920-1921."

[161] GPP/31-36/9668, Wrong to Parkin, 12 October 1911.

[162] GWP/B2004-0010/005/02, Wrong to Murray Wrong (copy), 26 November 1911; GPP/31-36/9668, Wrong to Parkin, 12 October 1911.

[163] George Wrong, "The Attitude of Canada," *The Living Age* 263:3410 (1909), p. 390.

[164] See especially Richard Symonds, *Oxford and Empire: the last lost cause?* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), ch. 2.

[165] GPP/13-18/5079e, Parkin to Lord (Albert) Grey (copy), 7 July 1902, GPP/19-24/5667-8, Amery to Parkin, 7 July 1904.

[166] GWP/B2003-005/004/2/84, Osler to Wrong, 19 January 1905, 2 February 1905; Parkin to Wrong, 15 January 1905, Wrong to Parkin (copy), 18 January 1905.

[167] Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars*, pp. 65, 67, 110, 113; Symonds, *Oxford and Empire*, pp. 276-81.

> it is of vast importance now to get hold of every man who promises leadership and educate them to think imperially.[168]

The result was the colonisation of Balliol by a new generation of Ontario liberals that included William Lawson Grant (1872-1935), the son of G.M. Grant who became the first Beit Lecturer in 1905; Edward Kylie (1880-1916), later professor of history at Toronto; and the future diplomat and Governor-General Vincent Massey (1887-1967).[169] These young intellectuals returned to Ontario imbued with Britain's "spiritual heritage" and a sense that "we must not be narrowly Canadian; still less must we be narrowly Ontarian."[170] In the latter years of the 'Laurier era' they threw themselves into the Round Table movement and reinforced liberal imperialism in Toronto. "True Imperialism," Kylie wrote in a representative article, "must appeal...to the free, peaceful and democratic instincts of the British people and the Colonies...consistent with the true object of Liberalism[.]"[171]

III

Liberal imperialism, however, was only one part of the evolution of Ontario liberalism in the early-twentieth-century. While Toronto liberals endorsed Imperial Union they met strong opposition from liberal intellectuals outside the provincial capital. On one side, the settlement of the 'neo-Ontarian' Prairie West reanimated the radical agrarian traditions of Grit liberalism. On the other, 'Whig' intellectuals in Kingston and Ottawa aimed to strengthen the Dominion against imperialism and racial antagonism. Together, these liberal 'autonomists' were Wilfrid Laurier's natural allies. And as John Willison rightly noted: "No one who knew Laurier could believe that he was an Imperialist.

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[168] GPP/25-30/7677, Wrong to Parkin, 27 April 1908 (emphasis in original).

[169] Other Wrong students to attend Balliol included historians Frank Underhill (1889-1971) and Chester Martin (1882-1958). For Grant, Kylie, and Massey respectively, see WLGP/8, Parkin's recommendation letter (draft), 27 September 1905, and GPP/7-12/2814-17, W.L. Grant to Parkin, 7 June 1895; Ramsay Cook, "Kylie, Edward Joseph," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, online, accessed 2 March 2016, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/kylie_edward_joseph_14E.html; Claude Bissell, *The Young Vincent Massey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), ch. 5.

[170] VMP/130/3, "'A Nation of Prophets, of Sages, and of Worthies,' A Speech Delivered on 18th December, 1917, by W.L. Grant on his Installation as Headmaster of Upper Canada College," pp. 3, 6.

[171] Edward Kylie, "Liberalism and Empire," *CR* 99 (1911), pp. 74, 76.

Economically he was a continentalist and politically he was an autonomist...he was in sympathy with the movement to establish Canada as an independent kingdom under the British monarchy."[172] Indeed, in 1902 Laurier reaffirmed his opposition to imperialism, which met the approval of his old friend W.D. Gregory, the radical liberal editor of the agrarian *Weekly Sun* who abandoned annexationism in the face of growing Dominion sentiment. "I am glad that...you [are] back again in sympathy with me," Laurier wrote to Gregory. "Perhaps I will now come again in the favour of our friend Goldwin Smith."[173]

But while Gregory supported Laurier through the Great War the centre of gravity of Grit liberalism increasingly shifted from western Ontario to the Prairie West. In this context, John W. Dafoe became Laurier's chief interpreter of radical agrarian politics. He was distinguished from his liberal contemporaries, though, by his origins in rural eastern Ontario. As Ramsay Cook noted, Dafoe's "family, like most of the people in the Ottawa Valley, was exempt from the Grit thunderings of the Toronto *Globe*, and clung fast to the Conservative faith of Sir John Macdonald."[174] He was more typical in that his mother was an English immigrant and his father, of loyalist descent, a Grand Master in the Orange lodge.[175] The young Dafoe, however, was entranced by Edward Blake's Liberal party and secured work as a parliamentary reporter in the Dominion capital.[176] After bouncing between Ottawa, Montréal, and Winnipeg, Manitoba during the 1880s and '90s Dafoe was offered the editorship of Clifford Sifton's *Manitoba Free Press* in 1901.[177] He thus joined the Ontario-led colonisation of the North-West, establishing himself over the next two decades as a powerful political operative and the intellectual spokesman of Western Canadian liberalism. As George Wrong wrote, he was "by far, to my knowledge at least, the ablest journalist in ~~Canada~~ the West. His newspaper is really better than anything we have in Toronto. Clifford Sifton owns it but none the

[172] Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 307-8.
[173] WDGP/2/1902A-L, Laurier to Gregory, 19 April 1902.
[174] Cook, *Dafoe and the Free Press*, p. 6.
[175] Ibid., p. 4.
[176] Ibid., p. 8.
[177] CSP/97/76245/8-10, Dafoe to Sifton, 20 July 1901. See also Cook, *Dafoe and the Free Press*, pp. 10-16.

less [*sic*] Dafoe is an autocrat who determines the policy of the paper."[178] That policy was, in effect, a 'neo-Grit' programme of free trade, decentralisation, egalitarian democracy, and, in common with Laurier, the "complete enfranchisement of Canada as a nation under the British Crown."[179]

The first and last of these policies especially appealed to John S. Ewart (1849-1933) and Oscar Douglas (O.D.) Skelton (1878-1941). Ewart, the nephew of Oliver Mowat, was born in Toronto and studied law at Osgoode Hall before moving to Winnipeg in the 1890s and Ottawa in 1904. One of the Dominion's leading lawyers, he gained notoriety for his defence of Louis Riel and the confidence of Wilfrid Laurier when he broke with Ontario liberals to support Manitoba's Catholics in the separate schools controversy.[180] But it was only after the South African War that Ewart publicly opposed imperialism and advocated an independent 'Kingdom of Canada' - a sovereign nation under the British monarch which he hoped would reconcile Canada's regional, racial, and religious divisions.[181] In this respect, Ewart espoused a Whiggish liberalism that rejected the majoritarian and 'provincial rights' traditions of Grittism while transferring its emphasis on local self-government from Ontario to the Dominion.[182] By the 1910s Ewart outlined his views in a series of *Kingdom Papers* (1912-17) delivered to readers across Canada and the British world, in which he defended the proposition that anti-imperialism and Canadian independence were compatible with the British connection.[183] He thus presented a radical anti-imperial argument in the Whiggish language of a 'preserving revolution.' "[I]f by independence," he assured a Toronto audience, "you mean separation from the British Crown...I answer, 'No, I do not advocate independence.'[...] We have stood still upon our allegiance to the British Crown. Let us stand steadily there."[184]

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[178] GWP/B2003-0005/008/55, Wrong diary (copy), 24 June 1916 (correction in original).
[179] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 71.
[180] Cole, "John S. Ewart," pp. 62-3.
[181] John Ewart, "Canada and the Canadian Clubs," *Report of the Canadian Club of Winnipeg* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Telegram, 1906), pp. 12-15.
[182] Cole, "John S. Ewart," pp. 64-6; Romney, *Getting it Wrong*, pp. 193-206.
[183] For contemporary views of Ewart, see W.L. Grant, "Mr. J.S. Ewart's View of Canadian History," *QQ* 21:4 (1914), pp. 473-85; CSP/207/162316-12, Dafoe to Sifton, 26 August 1919; Richard Jebb, "Nationalism versus Imperialism," *UE* 2:11 (1911), p. 768; Wrong, "The Attitude of Canada," pp. 91-2.
[184] John Ewart, "The Kingdom of Canada," *Addresses Delivered Before the Canadian Club of Toronto, Season 1903-1904* (Toronto: Warwick Bro's & Rutter, 1904), p. 128.

Oscar Skelton was perhaps the most 'progressive' of the new liberal generation, though his intellectual and political influences were nonetheless peculiarly Ontarian and British-American. Originally from Orangeville, north-west of Toronto, Skelton was, as he put it, "a Canadian of three generations standing, every drop of whose blood is Ulster and Protestant, and I may say 90 per cent Orange[.]"[185] After his family moved to Cornwall in eastern Ontario he attended Queen's University, where he encountered G.M. Grant and the political economist Adam Shortt (1859-1931). Shortt, a Presbyterian from Middlesex County near London in Ontario's southwest, attended Queen's and the University of Glasgow, and like Grant was imbued with Scottish liberalism and Idealism. As the Dominion's authority on economic history he was a mentor to Skelton, who echoed his support for Canadian autonomy, freer trade, racial conciliation, and the professionalisation of government administration. As one imperialist put it, the "Queen's University situation...is very radical...Our old friend Shortt sowed a kind a Whig opportunism very thick."[186]

Indeed, at Queen's and throughout his intellectual and public career Skelton was conspicuously Liberal, Whiggish, and anti-imperial. Ironically, however, he read Kipling and travelled to Britain in 1901 to sit the Indian Civil Service exam. After withdrawing for medical reasons he returned to North America, worked in a Philadelphia bookstore, and initiated the process (later aborted) of becoming an American citizen.[187] He then earned a doctorate in political economy at the University of Chicago where he encountered the American progressive movement before returning to Queen's as a professor in 1908. From there he delved into Canadian and imperial politics, ingratiating himself with the Liberal party. Within months he worked for the young Minister of Labour, W.L.M. King (1874-1950), and by the final years of the 'Laurier era' he befriended Laurier himself. The result was an authorised biography, *The Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier* (1922),

[185] Quoted in Hillmer, *Skelton*, p. 10.
[186] RTP/818/12, Glazebrook to E. Grigg, 11 August 1913.
[187] ODSP/1/1904, USA citizenship document, 9 May 1904.

which reflected Skelton's idolisation of "the finest and simplest gentleman, the noblest and most unselfish man it has ever been my good fortune to know."[188]

These liberal autonomists never matched Toronto's liberal imperialists in terms of their political organisation. This was due, in part, to generational and ideological divisions. Dafoe, for example, regarded Ewart as "too suspicious, both as to the designs against our independence...and the supposed willingness of some of our public men to have these designs succeed."[189] Similarly, relations between Dafoe and Skelton, and Skelton and Ewart, though cordial, were characterised by mutual suspicion. Dafoe's *Laurier: A Study in Canadian Politics* (1922) rebuked Skelton's *Life and Letters* as the work of an "avowedly...alert and eager partisan."[190] In return, historian Norman Hillmer notes, Skelton regarded Dafoe as anti-French-Canadian. He also "found Ewart inflexible and prejudiced...[while] Ewart thought Skelton hurried and imprecise."[191] Nonetheless, contemporary opponents believed that they constituted a distinctly 'autonomist' political and ideological group, and by the 1920s they anchored the Liberal party under W.L.M. King.[192] In the 'Laurier era,' they were among Sir Wilfrid Laurier's most steadfast Anglo-Canadian supporters.

'Greater Ontario' Liberals

I

Despite growing divisions over Canada's future in the British Empire, 'Greater Ontario' liberals - with the notable exception of John Willison after 1905 - continued to support Wilfrid Laurier. Indeed, they shared key assumptions about the 'British-American' character of the Dominion, while important political and ideological disputes intersected the autonomist-imperialist divide. It is fruitful, therefore, to think in terms of a spectrum of liberal ideology and Britannic nationalism rather than dichotomous factions. Yet by 1911 two significant transitions took place. The first was

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[188] Skelton, *Laurier*, I, preface.
[189] CSP/207/162316-12, Dafoe to Sifton, 26 August 1919.
[190] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 14. See also WP/37/286/27565-6, Sifton to Willison and Willison to Sifton (copy), 21 and 23 March 1922.
[191] Hillmer, *Skelton*, pp. 98, 112.
[192] Ibid., pp. 98-9; Clippingdale, *Willison*, pp. 359-60; Cook, *Dafoe and the Free Press*, pp. 128-69.

generational: the intellectuals who shaped Canadian political debates in the 1880s and '90s died or declined in prominence. The second was economic and social. The re-colonial 'Laurier boom' transformed Ontario from a predominantly rural and agrarian to an urban and industrial society.[193] Toronto in particular served as the 'empire city' of a secondary British 'oldland' that channeled Anglo settlers and British capital from 'Old Ontario' into the 'neo-Ontarian' Prairie West.[194] With 'Greater Ontario' booming the Dominion seemed to have finally outgrown its colonial status. As Laurier put it: "We are free, content, prosperous and happy...We are a nation. "[195]

Nevertheless between 1905 and 1917 Laurier's Liberal consensus unravelled. Four key factors contributed to its demise. First, as we shall see in chapter seven, liberal intellectuals embraced 'progressive' ideas pioneered in Britain and the United States to address new social problems. While they endorsed government intervention and technocratic administration, Laurier's stubborn adherence to classical or 'Gladstonian' liberalism appeared anachronistic. The second was a renewed dispute over freer continental trade. Since 1891 punitive American tariffs and Ontario's protectionist manufacturers stifled Laurier's pursuit of liberalised Canadian-American commerce. As 'Old' Ontario's industrial and financial sectors became more tightly integrated into the British world economy, explosive colonisation revived agrarian radicalism in the Prairie West. When the United States indicated its openness to reciprocal tariff reductions the question of North American free trade sharply divided 'Greater Ontario.' Third, the doctrine of colonial autonomy - the devolution of sovereignty from Westminster to local parliaments - reached its logical conclusion. In 1909 the German 'Naval Scare' prompted urgent debate over Canada's role in Imperial defence. Liberal imperialists and autonomists alike believed that the time had come for the Dominion to exercise full national sovereignty - through Imperial union or a 'Britannic alliance,' respectively.

Naval defence and reciprocity thus dominated the 1911 election that culminated in the defeat of Laurier's Liberals and the accession to power of Robert Borden's Conservatives. While

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[193] Bothwell, *Ontario*, pp. 98, 100.
[194] On this phenomenon see Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 412-13, 482-96.
[195] LP/C-882/162097-8, Laurier to Gregory (copy), 23 November 1909.

Laurier was attacked in Quebec over his naval policy, in Ontario Borden assailed free trade with an emphatic campaign of Britannic nationalism. The decisive blow was landed by John Willison, who fought reciprocity in the Toronto *News* and engineered the defection of the Toronto 'Liberal plutocracy' to Borden's Conservatives. The result in Ontario, Laurier lamented, "was not a defeat, but a land slide...[and] the Jingo spirit was the cause."[196] "It may be," Willison later admitted, "that there were demagogic appeals to British sentiment."[197] However, the rejection of reciprocity did not extend to the majority of liberal intellectuals - including many liberal imperialists - who supported Laurier and remained free traders. In the context of the 'Laurier boom' and burgeoning Britannic nationalism, they denied that freer trade with the United States imperilled Canada's independence or its British connection.

The fourth dispute arose in 1917 over the issue of military conscription. When Laurier declared that Canadians were "Ready, aye ready" to defend the British Empire at the outbreak of the Great War he reflected a near-unanimous sentiment.[198] But by 1917 the situation had changed markedly. Canadian soldiers won great victories and suffered great casualties, including the sons of Ontario liberals who died on the Western Front. At the same time, political antagonism re-emerged as low recruitment rates in Quebec stoked "a very strong feeling throughout Canada against the French Canadians...particularly...in Ontario."[199] The advent of the Imperial War Cabinet, moreover, highlighted Canada's new national status within the British Empire.[200] In this context, national, imperial, and racial considerations underpinned Anglo-Canadian demands for a cross-party National Government and the imposition of military conscription. In Quebec, conscription was widely rejected and Laurier opposed it as illiberal and potentially fatal to national unity. In 1917 he fought a bitterly contested campaign against Borden's newly-formed Unionist party, which comprised the old Conservatives and Anglo-Canadian defectors from Laurier's Liberals. "In 1917," Laurier remarked, "I,

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[196] LP/C-907/190045, Laurier to Botha (copy), 8 November 1911.
[197] John Willison, *The New Canada: A Survey of the Conditions and Problems of the Dominion* (London: The Times, 1912), p. 13.
[198] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 19 August 1914.
[199] CSP/204/160906-9, Dafoe to Sifton, 17 October 1916.
[200] See George Wrong, "Canada and the Imperial War Cabinet," *CHR* 1:1 (1920), pp. 3-25.

for one, will remain true to Liberalism, again with the chance of losing, but will win if the Liberals of Ontario remain true."[201] Yet on 17 December 1917 Anglo-Canadians voted overwhelmingly Unionist while Laurier swept Quebec, leaving "the traditional party system in ruins."[202]

In what follows we shall examine the often overlooked political, ideological, and regional cleavages among Anglo-Canadian liberals during the 'Laurier era,' their views of the rapid development that transformed Ontario and the Prairie West, and the role of these changes and disputes in the rise and disintegration of Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal 'consensus.' To that end, this chapter introduced the liberal intellectuals whose public advocacy and private advice both shaped and reflected the political and ideological underpinnings of Laurier Liberalism. But to understand and contextualise the ideas of Dominion nation-building that united, and eventually divided, Wilfrid Laurier and 'Greater Ontario' liberals, we must first come to terms with the significance and peculiarities of Anglo-Canadian 'Britannic nationalism.'

[201] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 511.
[202] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 180.

2

British Americans

"We are British North America; Britain is British West Europe."[1]
- O.D. Skelton, 1926

In 1887, the year that Wilfrid Laurier acceded to the Liberal party leadership, Joseph Chamberlain, the Liberal Unionist politician and later arch-imperialist, declared before a Toronto audience: "I am an Englishman...But I should think our patriotism was dwarfed and stunted indeed if it did not embrace the Greater Britain beyond the seas."[2] Five years earlier, Toronto's most famous resident, Goldwin Smith, similarly affirmed that he was "a loyal and even ardent citizen of The Greater Britain."[3] These contrasting representatives of Britain's radical-liberal tradition illustrated the prevalence of what historian Duncan Bell has termed 'the idea of Greater Britain' in the late-nineteenth-century.[4] Liberal intellectuals explained British institutions in terms of a supposed racial exceptionalism and conceived the settler 'neo-Britains' - the Dominions and even the United States - as part of a global British or Anglo-Saxon racial community.[5]

But this 'imagined community' was ambiguously delineated. "Greater Britain," as Belich writes, "occasionally included the United States, but...[m]ost often it was applied to Britain plus what became the Dominions."[6] The distinction between Greater Britain and the wider Anglo-world was especially significant in Anglophone Canada since Canadian nationality was premised, in large measure, on difference from the United States. Indeed, Linda Colley notes that identities are

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[1] Oscar Skelton, 1 January 1926, quoted in Norman Hillmer, "O.D. Skelton and the North American Mind," *International Journal* 60:1 (2004), p. 100.
[2] Joseph Chamberlain, "The Mild Sovereignty of the Queen, Toronto, December 30, 1887," in *Foreign and Colonial Speeches by the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P.* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1897), pp. 6-7.
[3] Smith to Prof. Tyndall, 6 October 1882, in Arnold Haultain (ed.), *A Selection from Goldwin Smith's Correspondence: Comprising Letters Chiefly to and from his English Friends, Written Between the Years 1846 and 1910* (London: T. Werner Laurie Ltd., 1913), p. 137.
[4] Bell, *Greater Britain*.
[5] See Brundage, Anthony and Richard Cosgrove, *The Great Tradition: Constitutional History and National Identity in Britain and the United States, 1870-1960* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); J.W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
[6] Belich, *Replenishing*, p. 458. See also Peter Clarke, "The English-Speaking Peoples before Churchill," *BW* 4:2 (2011), p. 209.

formed, in large part, with "reference to who and what we are not."[7] And in Ontario, where United Empire Loyalism was celebrated and memorialised, the American Republic served as the primary 'Other' while Britishness was upheld as the distinctive Canadian, even Upper Canadian, trait.[8] Concurrently, though, the United States was seen as a kindred Anglo-Saxon democracy, and historians remind us that the Loyalists, too, were 'American.'[9] A shared North American experience thus linked Canada to the republic and distinguished it from Britain and the other Dominions.[10]

Canadian historians, however, tend to explain 'Laurier era' politics in terms of a conflict between anti-imperial, North American liberals and conservative, anti-American imperialists.[11] This chapter challenges that interpretation by recovering liberal visions of Canada that encompassed North America and the British Empire. In particular, it argues that liberals conceived Canada as a 'British nation' rooted in North America - a 'British-American' Dominion - and illuminates the interpenetration of 'British' and 'American' outlooks in Ontario liberal thought. First, it compares Goldwin Smith and George Parkin, illustrating how their arguments for continental union and imperial federation, respectively, were premised on a shared Anglo-Saxonist ideology. It then contrasts these visions with that outlined by Wilfrid Laurier before 1896. This prepares for section two, which identifies the mainstream of Ontario liberal opinion: a 'Canada First' majority that envisioned Canada as nation under the British Crown defined by its combination of British and American elements. But like the original Canada First this concealed a fundamental dispute over the ultimate destination of Dominion nation-building within the Empire. Finally, then, it outlines liberal autonomist and imperialist ideas of Canada's place in 'Greater Britain.'

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[7] Colley, "Britishness and Otherness," p. 311.

[8] See for example GDP/3-4/1169-70, Denison to Lansdowne, 29 January 1885; United Empire Loyalists Centennial Committee, *The Centennial of the Settlement of Upper Canada by the United Empire Loyalists, 1784-1884* (Toronto: Rose Publishing Company, 1885); Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists*, ch. 4.

[9] See especially Maya Jasonoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012).

[10] On Newfoundland's position, see James K. Hiller, "Status without Stature: Newfoundland, 1869-1949," in *Canada and the British Empire*, ch. 7.

[11] See Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, ch. 1; Allen Smith, "Doing the Continental: Conceptualizations of the Canadian-American Relationship in the Long Twentieth Century," *Canadian-American Public Policy* 44 (2000), p. 7; Nelson Wiseman, "Public Intellectuals in Twentieth-Century Canada," in *The Public Intellectual In Canada*, ch. 5. A notable exception is Robert Bothwell, *Your Country, My Country: A Unified History of the United States and Canada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), chs. 5-6.

Dominion, Empire, Republic

I

Late-nineteenth-century Anglo-Canadian political thought is invariably explained with reference to two works: Goldwin Smith's *Canada and the Canadian Question* (1891) and George Parkin's *Imperial Federation* (1892). And with good reason; the rival polemics reflected a political order in flux and outlined two competing visions of the Dominion and the British Empire. In Canada, economic depression and racial antagonism clouded the future of Confederation. Meanwhile in Britain, Gladstonian liberalism was under siege as 'constructive imperialists' called for closer political and economic integration between Britain and its settler colonies. In this context, Smith, an old 'Manchester school' radical, upheld the orthodox liberal view that Britain's colonies were destined for independence. "I am no more against Colonies than I am against the solar system," he wrote in *The Empire* (1863), but "I am against dependencies, when nations are fit to be independent."[12] Soon, however, Smith concluded that Canadian nation-building was "a lost cause[.]"[13] Divided by immense distances and natural barriers, there was little pan-Canadian social or economic intercourse - to say nothing of the Anglo-French divide. Worse, Confederation entrenched the unnatural division of the Anglo-Saxon race in North America.[14] For Smith, the obvious solution was the political union of Canada with the United States.

Parkin's *Imperial Federation* was partly a riposte to Smith.[15] "No discussion of the relation of Canada to the Empire," he conceded, nor

> any more general discussion of British unity, would be complete which omits special reference to Mr. Goldwin Smith...[who is] in favour of the separation of Canada from the Empire, and...that form of national disintegration which is involved in the great colonies becoming separate states or annexing themselves to other nations.[16]

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[12] Smith, *The Empire*, p. 123; John Morley, "The Expansion of England," *Macmillan's Magazine* 49:292 (Feb. 1884), pp. 241-58.
[13] Smith, "The Political Destiny of Canada," p. 458.
[14] Smith, *Canadian Question*, chs. 9-10. See also Goldwin Smith, "Canada and the United States, *Forum* (Nov. 1888), pp. 241-56, and "The Schism in the Anglo-Saxon Race," in *Canadian Leaves*, pp. 5-43.
[15] See also George Parkin, "Mr. Smith's Book on Canada," *Leeds Mercury*, 31 March and 3 April 1891.
[16] George Parkin, *Imperial Federation: The Problem of National Unity* (London: Macmillan, 1892), p. 163.

The alternative, Parkin argued, was to discard 'Little Englandism' and embrace Greater British 'national unity.'[17] Technology had annihilated distance and Confederation proved that federalism could reconcile "British methods of...responsible government" with political union across vast spaces.[18] Of course, Canada's position in North America was "unique among British colonies...that annexation to another kindred state is a manifestly possible alternative to either independence or continued British connection." But unlike Smith, Parkin emphasised "the growth and consolidation" of the Dominion and that the "British people on the American continent," with Atlantic and Pacific coasts, were at the centre of Britain's oceanic empire.[19]

These works became touchstones of Canadian nationalist historiography: Smith cast as the misguidedly 'anti-nationalist' prophet of a post-imperial, 'American' Canada; Parkin as quixotically British, imperial, and anti-American.[20] Few Canadian historians, however, have grappled with their shared Anglo-Saxonist ideology. Indeed, Damien-Claude Bélanger recently dismissed Anglo-Saxonism as "a series of bland pleasantries," maintaining that imperialists were 'anti-American' while continentalists effectively rejected Britishness.[21] But as Carl Berger rightly warned, "the term 'anti-Americanism'...is too loaded...and too ill-defined" to accurately characterise Anglo-Canadian imperialists.[22] The same caution ought to apply to the idea of an 'un-British' liberal nationalism. Historian Edward Kohn, though, has provided a useful corrective, arguing that Anglo-Saxonism "could easily encompass the United States, the empire, and an autonomous Canadian nation."[23] Imperial historians, moreover, have clearly demonstrated that Anglophone intellectuals, including liberals, imagined Greater Britain-plus-America as an "Anglo-Saxon political space[.]"[24]

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[17] Ibid., pp. 29-30. See also Grant, "Canada and the Empire," pp. 678-80.
[18] Parkin, *Imperial Federation*, pp. 24, 33, 164.
[19] Ibid., pp. 116-17.
[20] Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, pp. 9, 26, 33-4, 36; Romney, *Getting it Wrong*, pp. 186-93.
[21] Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, pp. 162, 206-14.
[22] Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 175.
[23] Kohn, *This Kindred People*, p. 203.
[24] Bell, *Greater Britain*, p. 10. See also Bell, "Before the democratic peace," pp. 647-70 and "Beyond the Sovereign State, pp.418-34.

In this respect, Goldwin Smith regarded Canadian-American political union as a "reunion...for before their unhappy schism they were one people. Nothing but the historical accident of a civil war ending in secession...has made them two."[25] For Smith, the unhappy legacy of the 1776-83 Anglo 'civil war' was two separate states where there ought to have been one. 'Political union,' he argued, would solve parochial North American disputes and add a pro-British vote to the Republic to offset Irish-American hostility to England. Britain would "get out of all these troubles...and instead...have the assured friendship of the whole English-speaking race."[26] But for George Denison, Toronto's most "extreme Loyalist," such 'annexationism' was tantamount to treason.[27] Denison's "hatred of Yankees," however, was the exception that proved the Anglo-Saxonist rule amongst Anglo-Canadian imperialists.[28] G.M. Grant, for instance, lamented the Anglo-American rupture, claiming that "'Yankee' was only a French-Indian name for 'English.'"[29] Americans, he told a Toronto audience, "are our own flesh and blood...The schism that took place when the thirteen colonies broke away from the Empire has been a grievous bar...to the progress of humanity. No greater boon can be conferred on the race than the healing of that schism.[30] George Parkin deployed the same language. "A special capacity for political organization may," he asserted, "without race vanity, be fairly claimed for Anglo-Saxon people."[31] This was most apparent in the British colonies, which were "adding a new chapter to our race experience...Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australasia, South Africa, these are the old and the new centres...[of] a common genesis, language, and literature."[32] It was thus essential to cultivate close relations between the

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[25] Smith, *Canadian Question*, p. 267.
[26] JBP/16/70, Smith to Bryce, 7 May 1891; JBP/17/104, Smith to Bryce, 7 August 1907; Smith, *Canadian Question*, pp. 246-7.
[27] GDP/7-8/3136, Denison to Salisbury (copy), 15 December 1896.
[28] JBP/16/221, Smith to Bryce, 28 December 1903.
[29] Grant, "Canada and the Empire," p. 674.
[30] G.M. Grant, "Our National Objects and Aims," in *Maple Leaves: Being the papers read before the National Club of Toronto, at the 'National Evenings,' During the Winter 1890-1891* (Toronto: R.G. McLean, 1891), pp. 21-2, 26. See also G.M. Grant, "Current Events," *QQ* 1:1 (1893), p. 79
[31] Parkin, *Imperial Federation*, p. 1; George Parkin, "The Reorganization of the British Empire," *Century Illustrated Magazine* 37:2 (1888), p. 191.
[32] George Parkin, "The Anglo-Saxon in the Southern Hemisphere: The Workingman in Australia," *Century Illustrated Magazine* 41:4 (1891), p. 607.

Empire and the Republic - "the greatest of modern nations."[33] To this end, Parkin believed that Canada's "curious middle position in political thought between Great Britain and the United States," meant that it would "be the solvent which will unite in sympathy and on honourable terms the two great nations with which she is allied in race and language."[34]

Both Smith and Parkin, therefore, imagined Canada's vocation as promoting the 'moral' reunion of Britain and the United States. For Parkin, the key was "developing a national sentiment" - that is, Britannic sentiment - in Canada.[35] The 'senior' British Dominion would lead the federation of the British Empire, which combined with Anglo-Saxonist fraternal sentiment would promote an Anglo-American alliance.[36] Smith, conversely, dismissed imperial federalism as deluded.[37] Nevertheless, he claimed, "There is a Federation which is feasible...the moral federation of the whole English-speaking race throughout the world, including...the United States."[38] This depended on two developments: colonial independence in general and Canadian-American union in particular. It was in this sense that historian Frank Underhill noted Smith's "far reaching...conception of the place of Canada in the English-speaking world."[39] But there was another layer to this dispute: an ideological conflict over 'Britishness' between a staunch Gladstonian liberal and a preacher of Britannic Idealism. The latter involved the quasi-Hegelian idea of a globe-spanning British nation endowed with an 'organic' unity. For Parkin and other Idealists the monarchy represented this moral and spiritual bond as the locus of British imperial sovereignty and iconography.[40] Smith, by contrast, embraced the liberal-republican tradition of individualism and parliamentary if not popular sovereignty. "By loud protestations of loyalty to the Crown," as he put it, "a man absolves himself

[33] JBP/114/98, Parkin to Bryce, 28 December 1906; George Parkin, "The Relations of Canada and the United States," in *The Empire Club of Canada: Addresses* (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter, 1908), pp. 157-68.
[34] George Parkin, *The Great Dominion: Studies of Canada* (London: Macmillan, 1895), 234.
[35] AMP/31/31, Parkin to Milner, 11 February 1896.
[36] George Parkin, "American Rhodes Scholars at Oxford," *NAR* 189:643 (1909), p. 900.
[37] Goldwin Smith, "The Expansion of England," *CR* 45 (1884), pp. 524-40.
[38] Smith, *Canadian Question*, pp. 265-6.
[39] Underhill, "Goldwin Smith," p. 286.
[40] Cook, "George R. Parkin," pp. 15-31; Daniel Gorman, "Lionel Curtis, Imperial Citizenship, and the Quest for Unity," *The Historian* 66:1 (2004), pp. 67-96.

from loyalty to the commonwealth."[41] Like many British radicals Smith sympathised with American republicanism and - though a staunch unionist - seemingly identified more closely with 'Englishness' than 'Britishness.'[42] Whereas the United States, he claimed, was descended from "the England of Hampden, Milton and Cromwell," the Dominion was the product of Tory reaction.[43] He thus opposed the consolidation of the Empire while celebrating the colonies, including the United States, as outposts of English liberty and self-government.[44] As historian Duncan Bell notes, this was in fact an ambitious vision of a global Anglo-Saxon community.[45] Faced with taunts of 'Little Englander,' Smith retorted: "The England of Cromwell was not little."[46]

It is essential to recognise, however, that Smith and Parkin represented the ideological limits - not the mainstream - of Anglo-Canadian and particularly liberal political discourse. Parkin, for instance, though arguably a 'liberal Idealist' and certainly a 'progressive' thinker, viewed the Dominion through a pan-Britannic lens more powerful than that of other imperialists. Unlike G.M. Grant and George Denison he had no evident interest in Canada First.[47] This reflected, perhaps, that aside from his Principalship of Toronto's Upper Canada College (1895-1902) Parkin lived his adult life primarily in New Brunswick and England rather than Ontario. Smith, conversely, joined Canada First upon arrival in Toronto and became a fixture in the city. But while his radical free trade preachments found ready agrarian support, most of his contemporaries abhorred 'annexation.' Indeed, Smith consistently underestimated Ontario liberals' attachment to the British connection.

II

[41] Goldwin Smith, *Loyalty, Aristocracy and Jingoism: Three Lectures Delivered before the Young Men's Liberal Club, Toronto* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co., 1891), p. 11.
[42] Matikkala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition*, p. 1; Edmund Rogers, "Land and Tariffs: The American Economy and British Liberalism, 1867-1914," in *The American Experiment*, pp. 147-60; Robert J.C. Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).
[43] Quoted in Underhill, "Goldwin Smith," p. 290.
[44] Smith, *Canadian Question*, p. 196.
[45] Bell, *Greater Britain*, pp. 181-8.
[46] Smith, "The Manchester School," p. 382.
[47] Christian, *Parkin*, pp. 172-3.

In the 'Laurier era,' then, visions of Canada's future were articulated between these political boundaries. Few politicians or intellectuals endorsed 'annexation' while imperialists avoided specific schemes for Imperial union. Opinion among Ontario liberals, as John Willison informed Wilfrid Laurier, was "largely Canada First...kindly disposed toward the States...and while perhaps not quite against British connection still in favour of our exercising full national rights."[48] Nonetheless, liberals sympathised with Anglo unity and the utility of Anglo-Saxonist language was apparent in its deployment by Laurier, who as a French-Canadian "could hardly be mistaken for an Anglo-Saxonist."[49] At Toronto in 1889, for instance, Laurier lauded Canada's inheritance of British liberty and its links to the "great kindred nation to the south of us."[50] "It behooves us," he told the audience:

> having the relations we have to the motherland, and connected geographically as we are with the United States, to help create a better public sentiment in the two countries towards each other, and this view is largely shared, I am glad to say, by the whole Anglo-Saxon race in the two hemispheres...I, for my part, would want Canada...to do her share to reach that...ultimate object, namely, closer and ever closer union between all the countries of British origin and British institutions.[51]

Unsurprisingly, this rhetoric enticed Smith and Parkin. The latter speculated that Laurier might embrace imperial federalism,[52] while the former urged him to declare that "the Liberal party here is Continental."[53] Instead of becoming "Sir Wilfrid," Smith suggested, Laurier might take the title "U.S. Senator from Quebec."[54] Laurier's support for Canadian independence, however, was well known. If Canadians, he argued, were "to create a great nation on this side of the ocean, based, as I hope, on British institutions...our connection with Great Britain cannot remain forever what it is[.]"[55] "Light as our dependence may be on the mother country," he added:

> that dependence is not to remain forever...Perhaps the next step may be...complete independence, but...with those who, like myself, look to independence as the supreme goal, there remains a love for

[48] LP/C-737/748, Willison to Laurier, 19 July 1888 (emphasis in original).
[49] Kohn, *This Kindred People*, p. 203.
[50] Laurier, "Speech...at Toronto," p. 564.
[51] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 26 February 1889.
[52] Parkin, *Imperial Federation*, p. 160.
[53] LP/C-738/1938, Smith to Laurier, 2 November 1891 (emphasis in original).
[54] LP/C-738/2159, Smith to Laurier, 10 July 1892.
[55] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 29 January 1890.

> the motherland and a desire to remain in connection with it...There is no desire to change our allegiance, but the conditions of our relations with the Empire must be changed.[56]

Laurier thus accepted the Whiggish narrative that colonial development was defined by the growth of liberty and self-government.[57] For imperialists, this meant that "the process of making Canada into a nation must end...with a legitimate share in the supreme rights and responsibilities of the Empire."[58] But Laurier, who admitted the "grandeur in the idea of uniting the colonies and the mother country in one great body," rejected imperial federalism:

> I affirm that the very idea which underlies this organisation for the federation of the British Empire, is...the consciousness, that colonial citizenship, such as it is today, is inferior to British citizenship...and must be reformed. But I do not agree with [the imperialist] method of securing that reform; I do not believe in imperial federation.[59]

Instead, he argued, Canadians could retain British citizenship yet "improve and elevate our position as a colony." Though the liberal principles of self-government and local autonomy meant that it was "the destiny of the colonies to become nations," Laurier couched this argument in staunchly Britannic language. There was, he argued, a more practical and even inspiring alternative to imperial federalism: "British communities dotting the earth's surface, which I hold to be a grander idea than that of welding together a gigantic British Empire[.]"At the same time, however, he forcefully rejected Canadian union with the United States: "[I]f I were an annexationist I would say so...[but] I have again and again repeated that...my aspiration is...to see Canada an independent nation in due course of time."[60]

This affirmation was critical following the 1891 election in which Laurier's Liberals were tarred by association with Goldwin Smith's small cabal of annexationists. Though Smith was probably right that imperial federalism had "very little hold upon [Ontario]...beyond the protectionist and 'Loyal' circles of Toronto,"[61] John Macdonald's declaration, "A British subject I was born - a British

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[56] Ibid., 7 April 1892.
[57] Berger, *The Sense of Power*, ch. 4.
[58] Grant, *Imperial Federation*, p. 1.
[59] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 7 April 1892.
[60] Ibid.
[61] LP/C-738/1869-72, Smith to Laurier, 24 July 1891.

subject I shall die," played on Britannic sentiment and annexationist fears.[62] Ironically, however, Macdonald's victory itself spurred annexation sentiment in "the western and frontier counties of Ontario," whose farmers remained desperate for freer trade.[63] "There is no doubt," John Willison confirmed to Laurier, that "political union sentiment is growing in this province. I wonder if...you ought not to go pretty far in the way of Canadian independence, perhaps emphasising the view that as an independent country we will have the whole sympathy of the United States with us[?]"[64]

Willison, however, rightly concluded that annexationist sentiment was ephemeral. More important was convincing Liberals that an extension of Dominion self-government was not a rejection of Britishness but an assertion of Britannic nationalism.[65] Indeed, even Richard Cartwright, the staunch advocate for continental free trade, retained a "strong attachment to British connection,"[66] while most liberals envisaged an increasingly autonomous Canada within an "alliance of all English-speaking nations."[67] In this light, as historian Richard Clippingdale concludes, Laurier's Liberals eschewed both annexationism and imperialism, charting "a defensibly nationalist course, only mildly continentalist in trade matters and not implying a lessoning of British connection[.][68]

Canada First

I

Canadian Britannic nationalism, as historian John Darwin convincingly argues, was premised on the idea that "Canada's 'separate nationality' could only be guaranteed as a 'British' nation[.]"[69] It was 'Britishness' that distinguished Anglo-Canadians from Americans, while British institutions - notably constitutional monarchy and parliamentary government - were juxtaposed to American

[62] Pennington, *The Destiny of Canada*, pp. 155-223; Cumming, "The Toronto Daily Mail, Edward Farrer, and the Question of Canadian-American Union," pp. 121-39.
[63] LP/C-738/1894, Gregory to Laurier, 24 October 1891, C-738/1940, Smith to Laurier, 2 November 1891; Brown, *Canada's National Policy*, pp. 251-2.
[64] LP/C-738/2326-7, Willison to Laurier, 26 November 1892.
[65] LP/C-738/2185, 2326-7, Willison to Laurier, 22 July 1892, 26 November 1892.
[66] LP/C-738/2100, Smith to Laurier, 11 February 1892.
[67] Cartwright, *Reminiscences*, p. 283.
[68] Clippingdale, *Willison*, p. 80.
[69] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 152.

republicanism. Yet this sense of 'Britishness' was different from that expressed in the United Kingdom. In fact, the Dominions were commonly imagined as 'better Britains' built on racialist "myths of select stock," notions of frontierism and climatic determinism, and egalitarian, democratic politics in contrast to the cramped British Isles and their stifling class-system.[70] Ontario liberals particularly emphasised the latter, combining a belief in the superiority of British values, institutions, and connection with a New World, 'American' political culture. Anglo-Canadians regarded themselves as both 'better Britons' and 'better Americans.'

Laurier's Liberal 'consensus,' then, reflected a Canada First idea of Dominion nation-building that sought to 'build up Canada' as a 'British nation' in North America.[71] This vision held wide appeal, as demonstrated by the attitudes of Toronto's old Canada First allies-turned-antagonists Goldwin Smith and George Denison. The former greeted Laurier's 1896 election as "on the whole as a defeat of Imperialism and a victory for Continental tendencies,"[72] while the latter reported: "The Liberals are now very careful not to squint towards the United States. In fact they remind one of the Indian's tree that stood so upright that it leaned a little the other way."[73] But a lasting political coalition required strong support between the ideological margins, and in this respect G.M. Grant was more representative of Ontario liberal opinion. "We are to build up a North American Dominion," he argued, "worthy to be the living link, the permanent bond of union, between Britain and the United States."[74]

For Grant, Confederation began Canada's transition from "a British colony into...a British nationality," premised on the maintenance of 'Britishness' in North America.[75] Canada, he argued

> has inherited from Britain, not merely what the United States have inherited - language, literature, laws, blood, religion and the fundamental principles of civil and religious liberty...but also continuity

[70] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 466-7; Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, p. 78; Cecilia Morgan, *Building Better Britains? Settler Societies in the British World, 1783-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).
[71] Sandford Fleming, "Build up Canada," in *Addresses Delivered before the Canadian Club of Toronto* (Toronto: Warwick Bros & Rutter, 1904), pp. 75-85.
[72] GSP/M-2187, Smith to Wilson (copy), 25 June 1896.
[73] GDP/7-8/3042, Denison to Salisbury (copy), 2 May 1896. George Parkin later claimed that he, too, was "glad when Sir Wilfred Laurier [*sic*] came into power[.]" WP/32/243/24132, Parkin to Willison, 21 March 1902.
[74] Grant, "Our National Objects and Aims," pp. 21-2, 26. See also G.M. Grant, "Current Events," *QQ* 1:1 (1893), p. 79
[75] Grant, *Imperial Federation*, p. 1.

> of national life...the same traditions, the same political and constitutional forms; the same history, sentiments and affections; a common flag, a common allegiance, and a common citizenship.[76]

Of course, Grant's sense of British identity cannot be divorced from Anglo-Saxonism and British 'race patriotism,' and we shall explore the racial delimitations of Britishness in the next two chapters.[77] But his fundamental loyalty was to the Dominion, which he viewed from a Canada First perspective: "What is meant by the phrase 'Canada First'? It means that Canada - though still nominally and officially in the colonial position - is really a nation, and therefore that its interests and honor must be regarded by all true Canadians as first or supreme."[78]

Grant's vision of Dominion nation-building was thus strongly British and rooted in North America. With the transcontinental railway, he argued, "every part of our great Northern Confederacy has been linked together by steel as well as sentiment...over half a continent, we have built our nation's house, and are able to reach out one hand to Great Britain and the other to Australia[.]"[79] Canada was North American *and* British - though not 'English.' Not only was Goldwin Smith's faith in 'Manifest Destiny' profoundly misplaced, Grant argued, but as "an Englishman and an Oxford man" he was "almost incapable of rightly understanding Canadian sentiment."[80] Under Laurier, moreover, nation-building proceeded apace. Liberal support for a preferential British tariff, discussed in chapter five, along with imperial communication and transportation infrastructure - including a Pacific telegraph cable, the Imperial Penny Post, and fast Atlantic steamships - both demonstrated and facilitated the growth of Britannic nationalism. "Now everyone in Great Britain and in all 'the British Dominions beyond the seas,'" Grant wrote, "is an imperialist of some kind. The most statesmanlike words on the subject have been uttered by the Premier of Canada."[81]

II

[76] Grant, "Canada First," p. 249.
[77] Cole, "Canada's 'nationalistic imperialists," pp. 44-49.
[78] Grant, "Canada First," p. 247.
[79] Grant, "Canada and the Empire," pp. 683.
[80] Grant, *Canadian Question: A Review*, p. 4.
[81] Grant, "Thanksgiving and Retrospect," p. 228.

Politically, as noted above, Grant's support helped to (re)establish the Liberals' credibility as a reliably 'British' party. But his intellectual influence, particularly in relation to John Willison's embrace of liberal imperialism, was perhaps as significant. As the *Globe* commented upon Grant's death in 1902:

> The Canadian point of view has changed with the years, and our national outlook to-day is, on the whole, that which was Dr. Grant's principle through life...he strove to promote the habit of thought which would conceive of the individual as part of the whole, of the Province [Ontario] as a member of the Dominion, of Canada as a factor in the British race, and of the British race as related to humanity. Born in what was then an isolated eddy of the current of the world's life his political message to his country seems to have been to get into the main stream [*sic*].[82]

For Willison, getting 'into the main stream' entailed the assertion of Britannic nationalism within North America and the Empire. Two works, prompted by visits to the United States, illuminate his views. The first, *The American Spirit* (1899), published following a trip to Chicago's Fall Festival in 1899, noted the stark contrast between Canadian and American politics. Though Willison found American jingoism deeply off-putting, he admitted that, "one cannot but admire the exuberant and aggressive patriotism of the American people....One comes out of the presence of such vociferous and aggressive Americanism...and turns to something like despair to the petty bickerings and village squabblings of Canadian politics.[83] Despite evident progress since 1896 Canada still failed to exercise its "fair share of political or of moral power on this continent. The masses of the American people...know nothing of our growing influence in the great empire to which we belong."[84] Yet Willison believed that progress was being made and that under Laurier Canadians had enjoyed "three...[of] the most splendid years of all our history...[soon] we shall have won the right to speak on more equal terms with our neighbours, and have vastly enhanced our moral and political power on this continent."[85]

By 1905, as British journalist Richard Jebb (1874-1953) noted, a remarkable development was apparent: "The modern speeches of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, pervaded as they are by the national

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[82] *TG*, 17 May 1902.
[83] John Willison, *The American Spirit* (Toronto: George N. Morang & Co., 1900), pp. 4-5, 7.
[84] Ibid., pp. 2-3.
[85] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

idea, carry the same message as the habitual language of the Canadian people...Canada is not a colony, but 'the Dominion'; and her people are not colonists...but the Canadian nation occupying its own territory."[86] Willison elucidated the change in an address to the Canadian Club of Boston, published in Toronto as *Anglo-Saxon Amity* (1906), where he lauded "the splendid revival of domestic patriotism which has come upon Canada...At last we are...a united and confident people."[87] This was due in large measure to the growth of pan-Britannic trade, the settlement of the North-West, and the industrialisation of Ontario - subjects to which we shall return.[88] But these developments were built upon Laurier's commitment to "a common nationality and a united British commonwealth."[89] This sense of Britannic nationalism, Willison argued, formed the basis of

> an intimate and natural alliance between the British Islands and the outlying British communities...There is nothing which checks the free growth of national spirit in Canada, or limits the ample sovereignty of the Canadian Parliament...We lie closer than ever before to the heart of the Empire to which we belong. We hold more firmly than ever before our great place on this new continent. We know as never before that...Canada will be a name of power among the nations.[90]

Of course, Willison added, while Canadians naturally upheld the British Empire their American neighbours were co-representatives of the "political genius of the Anglo-Saxon race."[91] "We know that America powerfully moulds the spirit and...ideals of the new century," he proclaimed: "On this continent will centre the Empire of the English speaking races and...Canada in particular must be profoundly affected...by its close geographical relation to the United States."[92] Though there was no question of Canadian separation from the Empire or annexation to the Republic, the Dominion was intimately entwined with both.[93]

But 'Britishness' did not simply distinguish Canada from the United States - the adaptation of British institutions to an 'American' context also marked its difference from the United Kingdom.

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[86] Richard Jebb, *Studies in Colonial Nationalism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1905), p. 2.
[87] Ibid.," pp. 87-8.
[88] John Willison, "The Spirit of Canada: An Address before the Canadian Club of Boston, December 4th, 1905," in John Willison, *Partners in Peace: The Dominion, the Empire and the Republic: Addresses on Imperial and International Questions by Sir John Willison* (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter, 1923), pp. 87-8.
[89] Willison, *Laurier*, II, p. 356.
[90] Willison, "The Spirit of Canada," pp. 81, 89.
[91] Ibid., p. 77.
[92] WP/51/37631-2, Undated and untitled speech [1911?].
[93] Ibid., 78-81.

Unlike Britain, Willison noted, Canadians had "no privileged classes, no governing families, no age-long traditions. But we have...institutions as free and liberal as any other land enjoys."[94] Other liberals echoed this 'British-American' outlook. Even Goldwin Smith, who opposed the introduction of Britain's aristocratic institutions into the New World, recognised Canada's distinctive blend of the 'British' and the 'American': "Passing through the false front [of monarchy] into the real edifice, we find that [Canada] is a federal republic after the American model, though with certain modifications derived partly from the British source."[95] Though few Canadians were declared republicans and the British Crown was close to sacrosanct, support for constitutional monarchy - a "modern democratic sovereign"[96] - coexisted with egalitarian ideals.[97] "[A]t heart the Canadian is, ceremonially, at least, a republican," observed George Wrong. "He thinks monarchy a cheap and efficient form of government, and prefers it to...the prolonged quadrennial convulsion of his great republican neighbor."[98] As Wrong explained to an American audience:

> It counts for something that Canada has today a King...It gives this new society, in this new world, a certain old-world flavor...The link with the past is unbroken...[but if] Canada has a national type different from that of the United States it is different also from Great Britain. In some respects, a Canadian is more at home in the United States than in England. He finds hereditary rank, the stratified society, the sharp distinction of classes in Great Britain rather oppressive...[and] Canada has today as complete a democracy as any republic.[99]

This egalitarian streak was apparent in liberal discomfort with imperial titles. When Wilfrid Laurier was knighted, for instance, the self-declared 'democrat to the hilt' justified his acceptance to Willison: "[A] knighthood is a thing which, for my part, I loath [*sic*], and if I had not been, as it were,

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[94] WP/51/37627-8, Undated and untitled speech [1911?].
[95] Smith, *Canadian Question*, p. 157.
[96] Adam Shortt, "Current Events," *QQ* 9:2 (1901), pp. 147-8.
[97] See Phillip Buckner, "Casting Daylight upon Magic: Deconstructing the Royal Tour of 1901 to Canada," in *The British World*, pp. 164-6; Phillip Buckner, "The Invention of Tradition? The Royal Tours of 1860 and 1901 in Canada," in Colin Coates (ed.), *Majesty in Canada: Essays on the Role of Royalty* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, Centre of Canadian Studies, 2006), pp. 18-43. On the 'Britishness' of Canadian republicanism, see Wade A. Henry, "Severing the Imperial Tie?: Republicanism and British Identity in English Canada, 1864-1917," in *Imperial Canada, 1867-1917*, pp. 177-186.
[98] Wrong, "The Attitude of Canada," p. 389.
[99] George Wrong, "Canadian Nationalism and the Imperial Tie,' *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association* (1909), pp. 101, 103.

forced to accept it, I would have refused it with the greatest satisfaction."[100] Willison, in turn, "unreservedly" approved Laurier's policy to "limit knighthoods to the utmost extent possible."[101] When he later received his own he similarly claimed that it was disrespectful to decline.[102] "Titles," Willison wrote, "give no social precedence in Canada...Hereditary distinctions belong to the past, and titles, too may be banished...[although] one cannot desire that all the distinctive badges of British civilisation should disappear."[103] "There is no matter on which it is so easy to roux good Radical sentiment in Ontario," O.D. Skelton confirmed, as "the question of titles."[104] "Titles, hereditary or otherwise, are devices belonging to an organization of society for which there is no room in this country."[105]

But British institutions, shorn of aristocracy, were seen as more conducive to liberty and self-government than American republicanism. Indeed, the "supremacy of the Cabinet system," Skelton noted, was "a commonplace Canadian criticism" of American democracy.[106] It was widely held that parliamentary government, as Adam Shortt argued, ensured that:

> At any time...the government may lose its support in the house of commons and be defeated without a specific appeal to the people at large...the executive government...is constantly on trial before the people...It is in this connection that the Canadian parliamentary system provides a very effective barometer of public opinion and is therefore a very effective instrument of democracy.[107]

"The British Constitution," Wilfrid Laurier agreed, was in this sense "more elastic, more practicable, more amenable to the public weal, and therefore, more democratic than the Constitution of the American Republic."[108] Of course, there were "important differences between the written constitution of Canada and the unwritten constitution of the mother country...due to different

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[100] WP/24/179/17918, Laurier to Willison, 23 November 1899; LP/C-770/39404, Laurier to Willison (copy), 23 November 1899; Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 317-8; Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 69.
[101] LP/C-770/39403, Willison to Laurier, 30 November 1899.
[102] GPP/37-42/10483, Willison to Parkin, 24 February 1913.
[103] Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 318-9.
[104] LP/C-916/200135, Skelton to Laurier, 23 March 1918.
[105] LP/C-918/201871, 'Suggestions for Farmers' Platform,' enclosed in Skelton to Laurier, 18 November 1918.
[106] ODSP/9/'American political tendencies' [draft, n.d.].
[107] Adam Shortt, "The Relation Between the Legislative and Executive Branches of the Canadian Government," *American Political Science Review* 7:2 (1913), p. 191.
[108] Wilfrid Laurier, *The British and American Constitutions: An Address by Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier. K.C.M.G., P.C., LL.D., to the Women's Canadian Club of Montréal, 27 October 1909* (Montréal, 1909[?]), pp. 11-12. See also Grant, *Imperial Federation*, p. 10.

historical and local conditions[.]"[109] Apart from the egalitarian ethic, the most obvious - derived from North American geography and disparate provincial interests - was that the Dominion, like the United States, was a federation. But even Canadian federalism, more centralised than that of the Republic, was based on a British, monarchical conception of sovereignty and revulsion at the spectre of the American Civil War.[110] Thus "in our Canadian Constitution," Wilfrid Laurier concluded, "we have the best of both the British and American[.]"[111]

III

There was little substantive debate amongst liberals, therefore, as to whether Canada was a 'British' or 'American' nation - it was manifestly both. Geographically, and in large measure culturally and socially, the Dominion was North American. Between Canada and the United States, O.D. Skelton, observed, there was

> ever-growing intimate social and commercial intercourse...Roosevelt and Taft are names which call up more concrete images than Asquith and Balfour. The important trade unions are international...professional baseball leagues know no boundary line...[and] Canadians and Americans attend the same plays, eat the same breakfast foods, sling the same slang.[112]

From the French-Canadian perspective, moreover, Anglo-North Americans were practically indistinguishable. "American you already are," Henri Bourassa told Anglo-Canadians, "by your language, your nasal accent, your common slang, your dress, your daily habits; by the Yankee literature with which your homes and clubs are flooded...[and] by your loud and intolerant patriotism[.]"[113] As Goldwin Smith put it: "nothing separates the two portions of the English speaking people on this Continent but the political and fiscal lines."[114]

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[109] Shortt, "Branches of the Canadian Government," p. 182.
[110] George Wrong, "The Creation of the Federal System in Canada," in George Wrong, et al., *The Federation of Canada, 1867-1917: Four Lectures delivered in the University of Toronto in March, 1917, to Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Federation* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1917), pp. 14-24.
[111] Laurier, *The British and American Constitutions*, pp. 12-13, 15.
[112] O.D. Skelton, "Reciprocity: The Canadian Attitude," *The Journal of Political Economy* 19:2 (1911), pp. 77-8.
[113] Henri Bourassa, "The Spectre of Annexation," in Fierlbeck (ed.), *The Development of Political Thought in Canada: An Anthology* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2005), p. 35.
[114] Goldwin Smith, "Canada, England, and the States," *The Living Age* 253:3277 (1907), p. 196.

But it was not only radicals or autonomists who recognised Anglo-Canadians' essential 'Americanism.' As noted above, G.M. Grant regarded the United States as a kindred nation, while John Willison believed it was "inevitable" that

> between Canada and the United States there must be intimate social, commercial, and political intercourse...for thousands of miles only a lake, a river, or a land-mark separates [them]. The two countries have a common language, common customs, common traditions...The forces which make for unity and co-operation vastly outweigh the influences which tend to friction and separation.[115]

"When two peoples speak in the same language," George Wrong agreed, "this common influence must tend to make them alike...[and] the most pregnant fact in modern political life is that the English-speaking peoples have become dominant in North America."[116]

Of course there were substantial differences. The sensationalism of American newspapers, the apparent violence, disorder, and coarseness of American public life, and the ever-present 'racial question' in the American South reinforced a sense of Canadian separateness.[117] As historians rightly note, imperialists accounted for their "distinctiveness - and superiority" in terms of Canada's Britishness.[118] Yet liberal autonomists are commonly presented in dichotomous terms as essentially American. Historian Allen Smith, for example, claimed that liberals like John Dafoe believed that Canada was "indistinguishable in all important respects from its southern neighbour,"[119] while Damien-Claude Bélanger dismissed Britannic elements of Dafoe's thought as "nostalgia for Anglo-Saxon unity" based on a vague notion that "Canada and the United States shared a wider British heritage."[120] Dafoe, however, though undeniably North American - indeed, 'Greater Ontarian' - espoused a distinctly Britannic nationalism. North America, he argued in the oft-cited *Canada: An American Nation* (1935), was the "stronghold" of a wider "English-speaking world" and Canada was a

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[115] Willison, *The New Canada*, p. 20.
[116] George Wrong, *The United States and Canada: A Political Study* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1921), pp. 18, 23-4.
[117] Grant, *Canadian Question: A Review*, p. 29; GWP/B2003/005/008/59-60, diary, June-July 1916; Parkin, "The Relations of Canada and the United States," p. 160.
[118] Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, p. 128; Berger, *The Sense of Power*, ch. 6.
[119] Smith, *Canada - An American Nation?*, p. 4
[120] Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, pp. 61, 132.

"younger British nation."[121] During the 'Laurier era,' moreover, Dafoe espoused a Canada First view of the Dominion's "duties and obligations - the chief being, by increasing its own strength and prosperity to add to the strength and prosperity of the Empire."[122] This combined "deep-seated loyalty to the British Crown," with a sense of pan-Britannic connection.[123] "Towards Britain, the cradle of the race," Dafoe wrote, "from which we have embibed [*sic*] our moral, religious and political ideas, the feeling of the overseas Briton is too deep to be put into words."[124]

John Ewart and O.D. Skelton understood Canadian nationality in similarly 'British-American' terms. Skelton, for instance, lauded Laurier's vision of a "new and common Canadianism, and...the development of a nation within the Empire[.]"[125] The "Empire," as he put it, "begins at home."[126] But while the British Crown served as a "symbol of imperial unity," Skelton maintained that Canadians were also the "heirs to the memory of Lincoln, just as the men of Massachusetts may share with...us Milton and Cromwell."[127] Ewart, too, believed that in building the Dominion Canadians were "doing most for the Empire by first making their own country."[128] Canadians, he insisted, ought to consider themselves "a nation...no longer a 'colony' even in name, nor yet one of the 'dominions beyond the seas.'" "We are," he emphasised, "on *this* side of the seas."[129] Yet Ewart's nationalism remained deeply Britannic. Inspired by Canada First he sought to cultivate a truly national, British-American patriotism: "The founders of our federation, then, desired that Canada should be a 'nation.' They wished to be subjects of a great British-American nation, styled 'The Kingdom of Canada,' with the British Queen for their sovereign...Gentlemen, is not that what we still...diligently seek after?"[130]

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[121] Dafoe, *Canada*, pp. 4, 6.
[122] Ibid.
[123] CSP/97/76245-26, 'The Status of the Governor-General,' enclosed in Dafoe to Sifton, 18 October 1901.
[124] John Dafoe, *The Imperial Press Conference: A Retrospect with Comment* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Free Press, 1909), p. 32
[125] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, pp. 429-30; Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 55.
[126] ODSP/9/'Alliance or Centralization (draft, n.d.).
[127] O.D. Skelton, "Ultimate Politics," *QQ* 17:1 (1909), pp. 80-82.
[128] LP/C-907/189619, Ewart to Laurier, 23 September 1911.
[129] John Ewart, *The Kingdom Papers*, I, (Ottawa, 1912), p. 20 (emphasis added).
[130] John Ewart, "The Kingdom of Canada," *Canadian Law Review* 3 (1904), p. 483.

Greater Britain

I

Ontario liberals thus conceived Dominion nation-building in Britannic terms as the construction of a united, self-governing state under the British Crown in North America. This underpinned Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal 'consensus' and gained widespread currency among liberal intellectuals. It was evident, as Oscar Skelton observed in the mid-1900s, that during the 'Laurier era' the "growth of a national spirit has more than kept pace...with the growth of Imperial enthusiasm."[131] This had two important consequences. First, aided by the 'Laurier boom,' was the demise of Ontario's annexationist movement. Indeed, an aged Goldwin Smith admitted in 1907 that "nobody either in Canada or the United States" anticipated annexation,[132] while George Wrong agreed that "Canada is not...drawing closer politically to the United States. On the contrary...she has a growing confidence in her own self, [and] is daily growing farther away from...political union with that country."[133] "There is absolutely no movement towards...the United States," John Willison concurred: "In fact...there is a wonderful growth of Canadian national feeling and a disposition to follow as far as that sentiment may lead."[134] Second, there was growing resentment among autonomists and imperialists alike towards Canada's subordinate colonial status in the British Empire. "The great preponderance of Canadian opinion," as Skelton put it, was loyal to the Empire, but "they are Canadians first."[135] Willison similarly observed a "general expression...of opinion against any surrender of self-governing rights...even in the English-speaking Provinces there is a curious inclination to avoid any[thing] which will limit the free action of...the Canadian Parliament[.]"[136] This Britannic nationalism was concisely summarized by George Wrong: "Canadians are restive under a seeming subordination to Great Britain. They desire to be partners[,] not dependents."[137]

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[131] ODSP/10/'Canada and Imperial Defence [1904-5?].
[132] Smith, "Canada, England, and the States," p. 195.
[133] Wrong, "The Attitude of Canada," p. 390.
[134] RJP/ICS/116/A/1907/Jan-June, Willison to Jebb, 29 April 1907.
[135] ODSP/10/'Canada and Imperial Defence, n.d. [1905?].
[136] RJP/ICS/116/A/1907/Jan-June, Willison to Jebb, 29 April 1907.
[137] GWP/B2003/005/007/2/6, 'Canada as an Adjunct of the United States.'

What liberals resented, therefore, was not 'Britishness,' but the constitutional forms under which the Dominion remained legally inferior to Westminster.[138] The ambiguous position of the Governor-General as both a *de facto* constitutional monarch and an Imperial appointee was particularly derided.[139] The devolution of self-governing powers from London to the colonial parliaments had reached its logical conclusion. Though, as we shall see in chapter six, Laurier extended Dominion autonomy into international relations, there was a fundamental conflict - reminiscent of the American Revolution - between the inequality inherent in an *imperial* relationship and the 'British' right to parliamentary self-government. It was clear, John Willison wrote, that Canada must "recognize the responsibilities of national sovereignty."[140] "[T]here is no alternative," John Ewart agreed, "to Canadian sovereignty save an eternity of Canadian colonialism - of something that we all abominate."[141]

In this context, the debate over independence and imperial federalism reignited. In Toronto, liberal intellectuals formed the nucleus of the Canadian Round Table movement to promote the "dream...of a body, Council, or Parliament...in which all the self-governing British peoples shall have representation...and in which the representatives of all the Empire shall provide for its defence and...foreign affairs."[142] Outside the provincial capital, however, liberals tended to cling to the orthodox Gladstonian vision of colonial independence and "an alliance of British nations in which Great Britain's position will be the great one of primus inter pares[.]"[143] This mirrored divisions elsewhere in the British world, where politics coalesced into rival 'imperialist' and 'autonomist' factions.[144] The Round Table, of course, epitomised pan-Britannic Idealism and liberal imperialism. But Wilfrid Laurier was also the clear 'Gladstonian' or liberal autonomist political leader in the

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[138] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 71.
[139] See for example: CSP/120/76245/24-30, 'The Status of the Governor-General,' enclosed in Dafoe to Sifton, 18 October 1901; TNA/BNS/EWMG/1, Willison to E. Grigg, 14 February 1913; John Ewart, "The Canadian Constitution," *Columbia Law Review* 8 (1908), p. 31.
[140] Willison, *The New Canada*, p. 25.
[141] John Ewart, *The Kingdom Papers*, II (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1912-17), p. 209.
[142] GWP/B2003/005/007/2/6, 'Canada as an Adjunct of the United States.'
[143] Dafoe, *Imperial Press Conference*, p 10.
[144] LAP/AMEL/2/5/6, Amery to Denison, 15 July 1907.

Dominions - the "little Canadian" alongside "the little Englanders...and the Boer," as Leo Amery put it.[145] Two points are significant here. First, that Laurier was not simply a Canadian politician engaged in Imperial Relations; he was an integral actor in a wider sphere of Greater British politics. And second, that liberal autonomists were nonetheless 'Britannic' nationalists. Indeed, Richard Jebb noted that in "Britannic politics" the divide was "between the centralizers and the autonomists, each with their more or less definite policies; on the one side, Imperial Federation, on the other, Britannic Alliance."[146] The latter, he argued, was reflected in "the Liberal policy of Laurier[.]"[147] As Laurier himself claimed in 1908: "We are reaching the day when our parliament will claim co-equal rights with the British parliament and when the only ties binding us together will be a common flag and a common crown."[148]

Studies of the Canadian Round Table, however, tend to pass over this broad sense of Britishness, emphasising instead imperialism's seemingly inevitable capitulation to nationalism.[149] As historian C.P. Stacey commented: "Even a Canadian Round Tabler was a nationalist when the chips were down."[150] This view has been reinforced by the tendency of Canadian political historians to conflate anti-imperialism with 'un-Britishness.'[151] Yet focusing on the failure of imperialism, as Phillip Buckner notes, often generates more heat than light by "exaggerat[ing] the differences between the Imperial federationists and their opponents."[152] Instead, it is more fruitful to think in terms of an expansive, contested idea of Britishness and rival visions of Dominion nation-building. As O.D. Skelton explained: "We are all for the Empire. But...the broader question [is] whether...the British

[145] LAP/AMEL/2/5/6, Amery to Borden, 15 July 1907.
[146] Richard Jebb, *The Britannic Question: A Survey of Alternatives* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1913), p. 11.
[147] WP/22/165/16482, Jebb to Willison, 1 January 1910.
[148] Quoted in Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 70.
[149] See James Eayrs, "The Round Table Movement in Canada, 1909-1920," *CHR* 38:1 (1957), pp. 1-20; Christopher J. Rickard, "Canada, the Round Table and the Idea of Imperial Federation," in Andrea Bosco and Alex May (eds.), *The Round Table, the Empire-Commonwealth, and British Foreign Policy* (London: Lothian Press, 1997), pp. 191-21.
[150] C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict, Volume 1:1867-1921* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989 [1984]), p. 201.
[151] For this complaint, see Hillmer, *Skelton*, pp. 8-9, 339-40n10.
[152] Phillip Buckner, "The Creation of the Dominion of Canada," in *Canada and the British Empire*, p. 72.

Empire is to develop into a highly centralized Empire or into a (close) alliance of autonomous and equal states."[153]

II

As the 'senior' British Dominion, Canada was central to what Lionel Curtis (1872-1955), the Round Table 'Prophet,' termed the 'Problem of the Commonwealth.'[154] This referred to the Dominions' ambiguous status - neither imperial possessions nor fully sovereign entities. Canada, Curtis noted, "had lived longest" with this ambiguity, and his dream of an 'organic union' of the Empire found a receptive audience among Toronto liberals.[155] Nonetheless, liberal imperialists upheld Dominion autonomy and recognised the difficulty of institutionalising closer union. George Wrong, for example, dismissed the idea of "separation from Britain" yet doubted the prospects for "closer organic union":

> Canada will steadily become more independent in her outlook, more determined to retain and develop control of her own affairs...it is hard to see how...the welfare of Canada would be promoted by organic union with other states which would leave her in any respect less free than she now is...A whole continent could not be well governed in one state. If this is true of North America, how much truer is it likely to be of the widely scattered...British Empire![156]

Instead, Wrong argued that Britain could ensure imperial unity by admitting the Dominions as equal partners and accepting "the national aspirations of the various portions of the Empire."[157] "It may be a dream," he admitted, "that a league of states, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, girdling the world, can hold together for common and high aims, but it is surely a noble dream to cherish."[158]

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[153] ODSP/9/'Alliance or Centralization (draft, n.d.).
[154] Lionel Curtis, *The Problem of the Commonwealth* (London: Macmillan, 1916).
[155] Lionel Curtis, *The Round Table Movement: Its Past and Future* (Toronto[?], 1913[?]), p. 11.
[156] Wrong, "The Attitude of Canada," p. 393.
[157] Ibid., p. 394.
[158] Wrong, "Canadian Nationalism and the Imperial Tie," p. 108.

In this respect, most Round Tablers conceived parliamentary federalism as a distant, aspirational goal and advocated looser, more practical ideas of Imperial union.[159] "Federation," Wrong wrote to Phillip Kerr (1882-1940), the editor of the *Round Table*, was an "ideal," though constructive steps might draw "closer together Gr[eat] Britain and the democratic communities overseas."[160] Edward Kylie, perhaps the most active Canadian Round Tabler, articulated a similar view. The "self-governing dominions have virtually attained independence," he argued, and were confronted by a choice between *de jure* independence and Imperial union.[161] Significantly, this echoed John Ewart's assertion that, "Already is our virtual independence recognized."[162] Kylie, however, imagined a liberal Imperial union. Historically, he wrote:

> The free dominions viewed with suspicion...everything which seemed to threaten their autonomy. What we now describe as Colonial Nationalism was their reply...Its victory has been so complete that Imperialists themselves frankly recognise it...But probably the average Colonial would still prefer to entrust his rights and independence to the keeping of Liberals. The consent of the governed, the blessings of self-government...are the most sacred dogmas in his political creed...In short, every extension of Liberal principles, which Imperialists consistently oppose, warms the heart...of the Britisher beyond the seas.[163]

Imperialism, therefore, had to be a *liberal* imperialism, led by "someone like Bright or Gladstone, the very antithesis, in any event, of the current Imperialist type."[164] Though it "would probably be a mistake," Kylie added, "to propose at present...Imperial federation...should the time come to construct a more closely-knit system, Liberals, from their sympathy with self-government, will have the best opportunity of reconciling Colonial rights with Imperial demands."[165]

Even staunch liberal imperialists emphasised the importance of Dominion autonomy and accepted that independence was compatible with Britannic nationalism. As B.E. Walker explained to John Ewart: "I am a Canadian first and an Imperialist subject to that...I am as restive as most Canadians under what remains of our dependent relations with Great Britain...[and] as ready for

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[159] Alex May, "Introduction," in Alex May (ed.), *The Commonwealth and International Affairs: The Round Table Centennial Selection* (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 5-6.
[160] RTP/822/103-4, Wrong to Kerr, 29 January 1911.
[161] Kylie, "Liberalism and Empire," p. 71.
[162] John Ewart, "A Perplexed Imperialist," *QQ* 15:2 (1907), pp., 93, 95.
[163] Kylie, Liberalism and Empire," p. 73.
[164] Ibid., p. 74.
[165] Ibid., p. 76,

independence if no other honourable...course is possible, but I am not sure that...a closer relation...of the whole Empire may not be possible."[166] This was also John Willison's view. Though we shall further elucidate his ideological evolution below, for the moment it is sufficient to note that by the 1910s Willison supported Robert Borden's Conservative party, which he believed "dimly and remotely" foresaw "political federation of the Empire, with Canada as a powerful partner in a league of British nations."[167] This ambiguous language, however, punted imperial federalism proper into the remote future. Moreover, Willison admitted that most liberals had "no thought of immediate or even ultimate separation" from the Empire.[168] "Nothing is more stupid," he wrote to Edward Grigg, "than to attach the stigma of disloyalty to nearly half the Canadian people."[169] This was both intellectually honest and politically astute. Leading Toronto Round Tablers remained committed Liberals and it was important for imperialists to reach beyond their relatively narrow political base. But it also reflected Willison's Canada First outlook. Though an ardent proponent of "some central Council or Parliament...representing alike the Dominions and the Mother Country," his recollection of Edward Blake's 1874 Aurora speech revealed the Ontario liberal origins of his imperialism.[170] Despite evolving into a convinced protectionist and tariff reformer, Willison combined reverence for local autonomy and democracy with a call for the "federation of the Empire."[171]

III

The Toronto Round Tablers thus represented a distinctly Canada First tradition of liberal imperialism premised on what G.M. Grant had called "full citizenship, in other words...to be the peers and not the dependents of their fellow-citizens in the British Islands."[172] Indeed, Edward Blake had similarly exclaimed: "[T]he time will come when that national spirit...will be truly felt among us, when we

[166] JEP/1/51, Walker to Ewart, 9 March 1908.
[167] Willison, *The New Canada*, p. 16.
[168] Ibid.
[169] TNA/BNS/EWMG/1, Willison to E. Grigg, 14 February 1913.
[170] WP/53/37913, untitled notes.
[171] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 74.
[172] Grant, *Imperial Federation*, p. 4.

shall realize that we are four millions of Britons who are not free, when we shall be ready to take up...our share of national rights."[173] Undoubtedly, the Round Table's ideal of 'full British citizenship' was Imperial Federation. But in terms of practical politics they recognised that the path of least resistance could lead to what George Wrong later called "political equality...[and] an Independence and Alliance movement."[174] Though not ideal, besides Imperial Federation it was the only alternative to indefinite colonial status. For liberal autonomists, however, Canadian independence and a 'Britannic alliance' was the primary goal, and they shared contempt for anything that resembled the old imperial pretensions to govern Canada. "Canadian Liberals," John Dafoe wrote, "look to their leaders at Ottawa jealously to guard our rights as a country vested with complete self-governing powers."[175] As Wilfrid Laurier told the Ontario Club of Toronto in 1910: "We are under the suzerainty of the King of England. We are his loyal subjects...But [he] has no more rights over us than are allowed him by our own Canadian parliament. If this is not a nation, what then is a nation?"[176]

The main problem, though, arose because those powers were based on convention, not legally recognised sovereignty. They had evolved, as John Ewart explained, in terms that paralleled "English constitutional history, and American also down to 1776."[177] This was the familiar Whig story of the struggle for liberty and parliamentary government against the executive and prerogative powers of the Crown. "The parallelism is close. Substitute the Colonial Secretary in Canadian history for the Sovereign in British, and it is fairly complete."[178] Canada, Ewart claimed, had achieved 'virtual' independence: "Nominally, the British Parliament has authority not only to override all our laws, but, if it so wish[ed], to cancel our constitution and abolish our parliaments. Such authority is, however, purely nominal...Canada's power of self-government is complete and indisputable."[179] But as Canadians lacked the formal "powers of sovereignty," Ewart advocated a prompt declaration of

[173] Blake, *Blake at Aurora*, pp. 9-10.
[174] RTP/780/140, Wrong to Kerr, 20 July 1916.
[175] CSP/120/76245/24-30, 'The Status of the Governor-General,' enclosed in Dafoe to Sifton, 18 October 1901.
[176] Quoted in Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 71.
[177] Ewart, "The Canadian Constitution," p. 27.
[178] John Ewart, "Canada: Colony to Kingdom," *American Journal of International Law* 7:2 (1913), p. 270.
[179] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, I, pp. 2-3.

independence.[180] This, however, was not a rejection of 'Britishness.' On the contrary, Ewart wrote: "[A] strong British sentiment is one which I share. It is a feeling founded upon common ancestry, language, customs, literature and achievements...that...would be augmented and enlarged...by Canada's attainment of international rank."[181] But most autonomists were satisfied with a slow, Whiggish evolution towards Dominion sovereignty. Oscar Skelton, for example, maintained "that it is the way of our race to work out their constitutional development one step at a time, as concrete issues demand[.]"[182] John Dafoe, too, was satisfied with the full "development of the autonomy of the overseas Dominions to absolute equality with the Motherland."[183] In absence of some great crisis, therefore, autonomists were content with Laurier's vision enunciated in the 1890s: "a nation achieving its independence by slow degrees, and as naturally as the severing of the ripe fruit from the parent tree."[184]

Here, then, we can identify a 'Gladstonian' or autonomist vision of Greater Britain: a voluntary alliance of independent, self-governing British nations. This was, as Laurier put it in 1903, "the principle upon which the British empire alone can rest...that [it] is composed of a galaxy of free nations all owing the same allegiance to the same sovereign, but all owing paramount allegiance also to their respective peoples."[185] There were many names for this settlement. For Ewart, Britain and the Dominions were 'sister-nations' or "Associated Kingdoms."[186] Neither Canada's 'Britishness' nor its allegiance to the Crown, he claimed, would be altered by "abandoning the title and appearance of a colony...Instead of Canada being one of [the King's] dominions, she shall be one of his Kingdoms."[187] Skelton similarly dismissed "any centralized pan-Britannic organization," and envisioned Canada as part of a "defensive alliance with the others of the Five Free Nations."[188] This

[180] HBP/M-721, Ewart to Bourassa, 22 January 1914.
[181] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, I, p. 166.
[182] ODSP/9/'Alliance or Centralization [n.d.].'
[183] Dafoe, *Imperial Press Conference*, p. 9.
[184] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 7 April 1892.
[185] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 13 March 1903.
[186] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, I, p. 119.
[187] HBP/M-721, 'Constitution of Kingdom Clubs,' enclosed in Ewart to Bourassa, 31 May 1913.
[188] Skelton, "Ultimate Politics," p. 79.

equal, decentralised relationship was what Dafoe christened the "Canadian theory...of Imperial unity."[189] The "fundamental heresy" in Greater British political thought, he argued, was believing "that the Imperial relation is one of loyalty to England...[or] Englishmen," whereas Canadians were loyal to "ties of kinship, of affection...[and] of allegiance to the Flag and to the King."[190]

Liberal autonomists thus effectively collapsed the distinction between Dominion patriotism and independence on one hand, and 'Britishness' and membership of Greater Britain on the other. Not only did they believe that recognition of Canada's national status would preserve the British connection, but they regarded the assertion of self-government as an assertion of *Britishness*. As Dafoe noted, there was "no reason why there should be any conflict between" national and imperial sentiment, "they being in reality only two forms of the same strong race feeling."[191] Instead, it was the negation of Dominion autonomy through a "highly organized[,] centralized Empire," that carried "the seeds of disaster and disruption" for the British Empire.[192] This view of Britannic nationalism was summarised by W.L.M. King (1874-1950), the emerging leader of Ontario liberalism, in a 1913 letter to Laurier: "The essence of Government under British institutions lies in the measure of self-control and local autonomy secured within the Empire. Imperialism is the opposite. It means centralization, and is, therefore, anti-British."[193]

Conclusion

The 'idea of British America' was central to Ontario liberal visions of Canada. It was widely agreed that the Dominion was, or was becoming, a 'British nation' in North America defined by its peculiar combination of 'British' and 'American' characteristics. Though by no means limited to liberals, this belies the historical interpretation of Canadian liberalism as essentially continental and 'un-British.' On the contrary, Britannic nationalism was widespread and ingrained among Wilfrid Laurier and his

[189] Dafoe, *Imperial Press Conference*, p. 10.
[190] Ibid., p. 32.
[191] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Hawkes (copy), 28 January 1913.
[192] Dafoe, *Imperial Press Conference*, p. 10.
[193] WLMKP/C-1918/18954/A-A1, King to Laurier (copy), 22 May 1913.

Anglo-Canadian liberal contemporaries. This found expression in a Canada First programme of Dominion nation-building. Dominion status, moreover, was officially endorsed at the 1907 Imperial Conference and reflected, in large measure, the ideas and policies advanced by Laurier. As John Dafoe wrote: "Laurier looked forward to the complete enfranchisement of Canada as a nation under the British Crown, with a status of complete equality with Great Britain in the British family."[194] In short, Britannic nationalism underpinned Laurier's Liberal consensus in Anglophone Canada, which allowed his Liberal party to appeal in broad strokes to autonomists and imperialists alike. But Laurier was above all concerned with Quebec politics and the future of French-Canadians in the Dominion and the Empire. In the next chapter, then, we will turn our attention to French-Canada to explore the extent to which liberal ideas of Britishness were circumscribed by Anglo-Saxon racialism.

[194] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 71.

3

The Two Races

"The French Canadian question is the crux of politics in the Dominion."[1]
- George Parkin, 1895

The "Canadian problem," the French writer Andre Siegfried observed in 1907, was "above all...a racial problem. Great Britain conquered our French possession...but she failed either to annihilate or to assimilate the colonists whom we left behind."[2] Indeed, antagonism between the 'two races' - concentrated in Anglo-protestant Ontario and French-Catholic Quebec - bedevilled Canadian politics before Lord Durham's famous 1839 report "found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state...a struggle, not of principles, but of races."[3] For Wilfrid Laurier, the first French-Canadian leader of a pan-Canadian political party, the cultivation of better understanding between the races was central to Dominion nation-building. As historian H. Blair Neatby seminally argued, "Laurier's political philosophy would be misunderstood if...the problem of national unity was underestimated...[and] Laurier saw the problem of national unity in terms of racial harmony."[4]

Canada's racial nationalisms, then, have provided a persistently fruitful vein of historical enquiry.[5] And there is no doubt that late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Anglo-Canadian nationalism was staunchly Anglo-Saxonist. This chapter, however illuminates a largely overlooked element of Anglo-Canadian thought: the extent to which Ontario liberal intellectuals, in common with Wilfrid Laurier, invoked a civic or 'Gladstonian' idea of Britannic nationalism that sought to encompass French-Canadians and transcend the racial divide. This "liberal, pluralistic view of

[1] Parkin, *The Great Dominion*, p. 127.
[2] Andre Siegfried, *The Race Question in Canada* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1907), pp. 1-2.
[3] *Report on the Affairs of British North America from The Earl of Durham* (London: House of Commons, 1839), p. 16.
[4] Neatby, *Laurier*, pp. 205-6.
[5] See for example Raymond Breton, "From an ethnic to civic nationalism: English Canada and Quebec," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 11:1 (1988), pp. 85-102; James Kennedy, *Liberal Nationalisms: Empire, State, and Civil Society in Scotland and Quebec* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013; Sylvie Lacombe, *La rencontre de deux peuple élus: Comparaison des ambitions nationale et impérial au Canada entre 1896 et 1920* (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2002).

citizenship,"[6] however, was in constant tension with Anglo-Saxon racialism, while Ontario liberals were divided amongst themselves over the accommodation of Canada's 'French Fact.' Nonetheless, during the 'Laurier era' there was a surprisingly strong tendency for Anglo-Canadian liberals to see 'Britishness,' not as the cause of the Anglo-French antagonism, but as a solution to the racial divide. This chapter examines these debates in three parts. First, it introduces the 'racial cleavage' that defined Canadian politics in the late-1880s and early 1890s. Next, it delves into the divisive Manitoba Schools Question - a debate that both clinched Laurier's Liberal 'consensus' and illustrated the ideological tensions within Ontario liberalism over French-Canadian minority rights in the Anglo-majority Dominion. Finally, it highlights the deployment of civic conceptions of 'Britishness' in arguments over French-Canada's place in the British world.

Race and Religion

I

The 'Great Coalition' of 1864, led by John Macdonald, George Brown, and George-Etienne Cartier (1814-1873), the leader of Quebec's conservative *Bleus*, endorsed "a federative system, applied either to Canada alone or to the whole British North American Provinces."[7] This was motivated, in large measure, by Brown and Cartier's demands for extensive local autonomy which overcame Macdonald's preferred scheme of parliamentary union. Thus at Confederation the United Province of Canada devolved into Ontario and Quebec: majority-Anglo and French provinces, respectively. The new Dominion Parliament was officially bilingual and Quebec was guaranteed a perpetual minimum of sixty-five seats in the House of Commons.[8] But there were also small French-speaking communities across the Dominion, notably in the Maritime provinces, eastern Ontario, and the Red River Colony. And whereas French-Canadians, as historian A.I. Silver argued, increasingly "saw

[6] H.C.G. Matthew, *Gladstone: 1809-1898* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 [1997]), p. 464.
[7] Quoted in Ged Martin, "Introduction," in P.B. Waite (ed.), *The Confederation Debates in the Province of Canada, 1865*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006 [1963]), p. ix.
[8] Colin Coates, "French-Canadians' Ambivalence to the British Empire," in *Canada and the British Empire*, pp. 190-91.

Canada as a bilingual country," most Anglo-Canadians "saw it as an English country with a bilingual province."[9]

This divergence became acute when Louis Riel (1844-85), the leader of the mixed-race Indigenous and European - and largely Catholic and Francophone - Métis, led two insurrections against Dominion sovereignty in the North-West. The execution of an Anglo-Ontarian settler, Thomas Scott, by Riel's Provisional Government during the Red River Rebellion (1869-70) inflamed Ontario opinion. After the ensuing North-West Rebellion (1884-5), Riel was convicted of treason and executed at Regina (modern Saskatchewan) on 16 November 1885. As a result, Riel became a French-Catholic martyr and even Wilfrid Laurier declared in a speech at Montréal that, "Had I been born on the banks of the Saskatchewan...I would myself have shouldered a musket[.]"[10] In this context, Honoré Mercier became Quebec's Premier in 1887 buoyed by French-Canadian racial nationalism.[11] But in Ontario, despite Edward Blake's attempts at conciliation, most Liberals supported Macdonald's decision not to pardon Riel.[12] "Hence because of division and disunion over the execution at Regina," John Willison recalled, "Mr. Blake failed in [the] 1887 [election]...[and] imposed his resignation upon a broken and disheartened party."[13]

Racial antipathy was further inflamed by the Jesuit Estates Act (1888), by which Quebec compensated the Catholic order for the expropriation of its property after the British Conquest of Canada. The legislation provoked outrage in Ontario over alleged clerical interference in politics and the perception that "French-Catholic assertiveness threatened both Canadian unity and the rule of law."[14] "I believe the disturbing element in our politics is Mr. Mercier," Willison wrote to Laurier in a representative letter: "[H]is course I regard as a menace to the Liberal party...[and] the

[9] A.I. Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation, 1864-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 244.
[10] Skelton, *Laurier*, I, p. 314.
[11] Mason Wade, *The French Canadians, 1760-1945* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 421-40.
[12] LP/C-737/300, Cartwright to Laurier, 22 December 1885.
[13] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 150.
[14] Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea*, p. 183.

confederation[.]"[15] "Mercier," the new Liberal leader admitted, "may prove a cause of troubles to our friends in other provinces."[16] Sure enough, in 1889 at Toronto D'Alton McCarthy (1836-1898), the Conservative founder of Canada's Imperial Federation League, initiated the Equal Rights Association of Ontario to agitate for federal disallowance of Quebec's legislation. More generally, 'Equal Rights' represented a staunchly Anglo-Saxonist strand of Ontario politics that sought to assimilate French-Canadians into a "British country."[17] This deepening racial divide reflected the global intensification of racial nationalism in the late-nineteenth-century as "ethnicity and language became the central, increasingly the decisive or even the only criteria of potential nationhood."[18] In the Anglo-world this took the form of a virulent belief in Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy.

II

Unsurprisingly, then, the leading Anglo-Saxonist among Ontario liberals was also the most acerbic critic of Dominion nation-building. "To make a nation," wrote Goldwin Smith, "there must be a common life, common sentiments, common aims, and common hopes. Of these, in the case of Quebec and Ontario, there are none."[19] Quebec differed from "the British Provinces," he wrote, "in race, language, religion...[and] occupying also a territory apart, it is a separate nation, and is morally certain to pursue a separate course."[20] Yet Smith's views illustrated the confused 'logic' of Anglo-Saxonist ideology. On one hand, he loosely subscribed to a "Teutonic theory of race" that emphasised the importance of hereditary racial differences between French and Anglo-Saxon.[21] While French-Canadians were often thought of as a 'Latin' race, Smith maintained that their "race characters" derived from the "Breton Celt" and "the more solid and shrewder Norman" - hardly a

[15] LP/C-737/884-5, Willison to Laurier, 26 April 1889.
[16] WP/24/179/17690, Laurier to Willison, 26 June 1890.
[17] D'Alton McCarthy, *Great Speech Delivered in Ottawa, December 12th, 1889* (Toronto: Equal Rights Association of Ontario, 1890), p. 16.
[18] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 [1992]), p. 102.
[19] Goldwin Smith, *The Bystander: A monthly review of current events, Canadian and general, 1889-90* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose & co.), p. 78.
[20] Smith, *Canadian Question*, pp. 214-15.
[21] Bell, *Greater Britain*, p. 191. See Goldwin Smith, "The Greatness of England," *CR* 34 (1878), pp. 1-18.

sharp divergence from the Anglo-Celtic British.[22] On the other hand, he claimed that "Race character may not be congenital or indelible," and argued that kindred 'Celtic' races, notably the Irish and French-Canadians, should be "Anglo-Saxonized."[23] "Either the conquest of Quebec was utterly fatuous," he wrote, "or it is to be desired that the American Continent should belong to the English tongue and Anglo-Saxon civilisation."[24]

Like most Ontarians, Smith regarded French-Canadians as "backward" due to the "influences, ecclesiastical and social, to which they are subjected in their state of isolation." Nevertheless, he regarded the *Quebecois* as "good people, kindly by nature, courteous...frugal and generally moral[.]"[25] This romanticised *habitant* was a common trope. For imperialists like George Parkin and George Denison, French-Canadians' conservatism seemed to reinforce the British connection and repulse American influence - though Parkin speculated that they could overcome their "race inertia"[26] by integrating "into the tide of Anglo-Saxon movement on the [North American] continent."[27] Liberals, too, saw Quebec as isolated, clerical, and conservative. The "romantic" St. Lawrence River, wrote Adam Shortt, "naturally calls up visions of the past" and the "cheerful, careless, kindly spirit of the French Canadian...his lack of enterprise...and optimistic conservatism...often cause him to be regarded as a backward citizen."[28] Quebec, having retained its language and religion, remarked George Wrong, remained "a Gallic island in the vast Anglo-Saxon sea of North America."[29]

For Smith, however, the spectre of an unassimilated "French and Papal nationality" - consolidated in Quebec and expanding into Ontario and the North-West - was the fatal flaw of Dominion nation-building. He thus sided with the 'Equal Rights' movement in defence of "liberty,

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[22] Smith, *Canadian Question*, p. 7.
[23] Smith, "Schism in the Anglo-Saxon Race," p. 43; Goldwin Smith, "The Irish Question," in *Essays on Questions of the Day: Political and Social* (London: Macmillan, 1893), p. 266.
[24] Smith, *Canadian Question*, p. 275.
[25] Goldwin Smith, "Anglo-Saxon Union: A Response to Mr. Carnegie," *NAR* 157:441 (1893), p. 77.
[26] Parkin, *The Great Dominion*, p. 144.
[27] Parkin, *Imperial Federation*, pp. 155, 157, 162; Denison, *Imperial Unity*, p. 184.
[28] Adam Shortt, "Down the St. Lawrence on a Timber Raft," *QQ* 10:1 (1902), pp. 16, 19.
[29] George Wrong, *A Canadian Manor and its Seigneurs* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1908), p. 177.

political and religious" against "the reactionary influence of the Medieval Church."[30] But he nonetheless maintained that Anglophone Canada was "too weak to assimilate the French element."[31] Only the political union of the Anglo-Saxon race in North America, he concluded, could impede "the intensification and extension of [the] French nationality in the midst of us."[32]

Yet most Ontario liberals rejected Smith's assimilationist, anti-Confederation views in favour of a more expansive idea of Britishness. This was perhaps best exemplified by G.M. Grant, who believed that the future of the "English speaking race" lay in Canada, the United States, and Australasia, yet derided the idea of an Anglo-dominated Canada.[33] "It may be," he wrote, "that as a Celt myself I was more attracted than the Saxon is likely to be by the...*habitant*, and felt that he would contribute to the common stock [the] picturesque and even heroic elements that Upper Canadians needed."[34] Though Grant admitted the significance of racial differences he took a 'Gladstonian' view of citizenship:

> [T]o suppose that national unity requires uniformity of language and race is an abstract conception scarcely worth refuting...The highest form of national life does not depend on identity, but rather on differences that are transcended by common political interests and sentiments.[35]

This liberal outlook, Grant affirmed, was essential if the Dominion was to survive. As he put it: "We have undertaken to build upon this continent a Franco-British-North-American state, believing that these three elements can be fused into a common life."[36] The clear implication was for Anglo-Canadians to embrace French-Canada or risk an entrenched racial and sectarian divide. Like Ireland, Grant argued, Quebec featured "a Celtic people, massed together in one Province," yet unlike the Catholic Irish, French-Canadians were "peaceable, contented, prosperous...[and] heartily loyal[.]"[37] The key difference, he claimed, was Canada's liberal idea of Britishness and its respect for local

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[30] Smith, *Bystander*, pp. 3, 11.
[31] Smith, *Canadian Question*, p. 8.
[32] JBP/16/ 69, Smith to Bryce, 7 May 1891.
[33] WLGP/14, G.M. Grant to W.L. Grant, 3 August 1888.
[34] Grant, "Thanksgiving and Retrospect," p. 224.
[35] Grant, "Canada and the Empire,", p. 684.
[36] Grant, "Canada First," p. 249.
[37] G.M. Grant, *French Canadian Life and Character*, pp. 54, 72.

customs and political autonomy. In "British America," Grant claimed, "there may be complete political assimilation without fusion of race or language...So, Quebec...will speak French for centuries...and on occasions its vote will be as solid as that of Wales, Scotland or Ireland...but politically [French-Canadians] are British and their hearts are all for Canada."[38] The Anglo-Saxonist alternative, he warned, entailed "two hostile factions, one Roman Catholic, the other Protestant...the curse of Ireland."[39]

III

In the late-1880s Wilfrid Laurier was thrust into this debate as an advocate of racial conciliation. But as noted in chapter one, Ontario liberals retained "traditions and susceptibilities inimical to any effective alliance with the Roman Catholic Church and the Province of Quebec."[40] Laurier thus harboured understandable doubts about his appeal to Anglo-Canadians. The leader of the Liberal party, he confided to John Willison, "should not be a French Canadian. If the game is to win, the leader ought to belong to the race of the great majority of the people of this country."[41] Yet advised by Willison to "talk on the greatness of Canada...no race differences, full provincial rights," Laurier disarmed Ontario Grits.[42] "Certainly no one can respect or admire more than I do the Anglo-Saxon race," he told Parliament, but it did "not follow that...we should all be merged into the Anglo-Saxon element." On the contrary, Ontario's Equal Rights movement, which sought "the annihilation of the French race as an individual people in this Dominion," was "anti-Canadian...anti-British...[and] fatal to the hope we at one time entertained...of forming a nation on this continent."[43]

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[38] Grant, *Canadian Question: A Review*, pp. 33-5.
[39] Quoted in Grant, *Principal Grant*, p. 364.
[40] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 150.
[41] WP/24/179/17691, Laurier to Willison, 26 June 1890. John Dafoe speculated that Laurier's "proffered resignation" was "really intended...to buttress his position as leader[.]" Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 33.
[42] LP/C-737/747-8, Willison to Laurier, 19 July 1888.
[43] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 17 February 1890.

Laurier's idea of racial conciliation, then, involved a liberal Britannic nationalism - the hope that Dominion nation-building would be furthered by "the two races" standing "together...British in allegiance and Canadian in sentiment."[44] As he told a Quebec audience:

> We are French-Canadians, but our country is not confined to the territory over-shadowed by the citadel of Quebec...it is the whole of what is covered by the British flag on the American continent...Our fellow-countrymen are not only those in whose veins runs the blood of France. They are all those, whatever their race or...language...who acknowledge the sovereignty of the British Crown.[45]

This rhetoric had widespread appeal and countered the Equal Rights attempt to "preach Ontario into intolerance."[46] To Anglo-Canadians, Laurier represented a modern, bilingual, and *British* French-Canada. Even Anglo-Saxonists like George Parkin praised him as "English as well as French speaking, Liberal in the larger sense of the word...and inspired by a patriotism which reaches far beyond Quebec."[47] Laurier, Goldwin Smith agreed, was among the "finest men of Quebec...combining something of French spirit and grace with British integrity."[48]

Prior to the 1891 election, therefore, Willison assured Laurier that in Ontario, "what prejudice there is against you would cost us few Liberal votes." But if he resigned, "How effective will be the argument that you are sacrificed because you are french and catholic [*sic*]? Will [it] not...consolidate the catholic [*sic*] vote for Sir John Macdonald all over Canada?"[49] The key, Willison argued, was "not to use the Jesuit Estates matter against...Macdonald...[and] build up Equal Rights at the expense of ourselves."[50] Neither the Conservatives - an awkward alliance of Ontario Orangemen and *Quebecois* Roman Catholics - nor the Liberals benefited from racial conflict. Laurier, who recognised that in Ontario "the feelings which have made the [Equal Rights] movement strong among the masses may reappear at any moment,"[51] shared Willison's view that the Liberals should

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[44] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 17 February 1890.
[45] Laurier, "The 24th June, 1889," in *Wilfrid Laurier on the Platform*, pp. 527-8.
[46] LP/C-737/969-70, Willison to Laurier, 16 July 1889.
[47] Parkin, *The Great Dominion*, pp. 135-6.
[48] JBP/16/75, Smith to Bryce, 16 April 1892.
[49] LP/C-738/1342-3, Willison to Laurier, 30 June 1890.
[50] LP/C-738/1332, Willison to Laurier, 23 June 1890.
[51] WP/24/179/17690, Laurier to Willison, 26 June 1890.

"confine attention...to the trade question and leave Quebec and sectarian issues alone."[52] This effort was remarkably successful. Indeed, as historian Christopher Pennington notes, the divisive subjects of race and religion that split Canadians following the execution of Louis Riel hardly featured in the 1891 election.[53] Moreover, despite Macdonald's victory the contest proved that a French-speaking Roman Catholic could in fact command the support of Ontario liberals. "Fifteen months ago it was said in Ontario that no 'Frenchman' could lead the Liberals of Ontario," one supporter wrote to Laurier. "Today such a remark is impossible in our Province...For the first time in many[,] many years the reform party of Ontario speak lovingly of their Chief."[54]

Majority Rule and Minority Rights

I

Racial strife, however, soon re-emerged over the question of the educational rights of Manitoba's French-Catholic minority. The *Manitoba Act* (1870), which re-constituted the Red River Colony as a province of the Dominion, had established a 'dualist' polity that reflected its mixed French-Catholic and Anglo-protestant population.[55] This entrenched a bilingual legislature, courts, and a separate, publicly-funded Catholic school-system, effectively institutionalising parallel French and Anglo schools.[56] But the Canadian Pacific Railway's arrival at Winnipeg in 1882 accelerated a boom in Anglo and especially Ontarian settlement. Whereas in 1870 nearly half the province's 12,000 people were Francophone Métis and Roman Catholics, by 1886 the population rose to 109,000, of which "7 per cent were Métis...and the Roman Catholic proportion had shrunk...to about one-eighth."[57] In 1890 the now-Anglo-dominated legislature abolished bilingualism and, more controversially, separate

[52] LP/C-738/1387, Willison to Laurier, 9 July 1890; WP/24/179/17686, Laurier to Willison, 18 June 1890.
[53] Pennington, *The Destiny of Canada*, p. 287.
[54] LP/C-738/1659, Crerar to Laurier, 9 March 1891 (emphasis in original).
[55] Kennedy, *Liberal Nationalisms*, pp. 45-6.
[56] Gerald Friesen, "Bilingualism in Manitoba: The Historical Context," in *River Road: Essays on Manitoba and Prairie History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1996), p. 24.
[57] Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 202.

Catholic schools, replacing them with "a national non-denominational [school] system[.]"[58] Conceived as a 'second Quebec,' Manitoba was effectively re-founded as a 'neo-Ontario.' Predictably, the Schools Act prompted indignation in Quebec, while in 'Old' Ontario support for Manitoba's Anglo-majority crossed ideological and party lines. On the 'Manitoba Schools Question' many Ontario liberals found themselves in awkward agreement with ultra-protestant and Anglo-Saxonist Conservatives.

The abolition of bilingualism, though controversial, was not unconstitutional. But Manitoba's attack on separate Catholic schools was quickly challenged in court, keeping the issue "in abeyance for some time."[59] During this reprieve Dominion politics were upended. John Macdonald's death in late-1891 removed the lynchpin of the Conservatives' Orange-Catholic alliance. Unstable leadership and growing sectarian tensions steadily undermined the governing party.[60] In this context, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC) reanimated the schools question: in 1892 it upheld Manitoba's decision, and in 1895 it confirmed the Dominion's prerogative to override provincial law.[61] When the Conservative government endorsed 'remedial' action to restore separate schools Goldwin Smith perceived that the situation would test "the zeal of the Liberals for local liberties and their power of adhering to principle in defiance of the Catholic vote."[62] Indeed, as John Willison remarked to Laurier, remedial action changed "the face of politics very materially...The position is an exceedingly difficult one and...whatever your course may be, I at least will not find fault."[63] Laurier faced two disastrous scenarios. In Quebec, he risked the combined opprobrium of the Catholic hierarchy and *rouge* radicals if he failed to defend the minority.[64] Yet he understood, as Willison made clear, that Ontario "will destroy any party that attempts arbitrary interference with

[58] John Dafoe, *Clifford Sifton in Relation to His Times* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1931), p. 41.
[59] WP/24/179/17689, Laurier to Willison, 26 June 1890.
[60] Creighton, *Canada's First Century*, pp. 78-82.
[61] Skelton, *Laurier*, I, p. 459.
[62] Smith, *The Bystander*, p. 14.
[63] LP/C-739/3680, Willison to Laurier, 22 March 1895.
[64] On the latter, see Dutil, *Liberal Progressivism in Laurier's Quebec*, p. 47.

Manitoba."[65] "[A]rbitrarily coercing a province," John Dafoe confirmed from Winnipeg, would "risk...the dismemberment of Confederation (this expression is not one whit too strong)."[66]

II

Conservatives, however, were themselves divided over the introduction of remedial legislation largely intended to buttress their position in Quebec. In Ontario, two Conservative factions rebelled. The most important was led by D'Alton McCarthy, the "Toronto lawyer of eminence" who represented the Manitoba Government.[67] His essentially Anglo-Saxonist objective was to prevent the consolidation of French-Canadian nationalism in Quebec and its expansion into Ontario and the North-West. To this end, he advocated the abolition of separate Catholic schools along with French-language privileges in Manitoba, arguing that they obstructed the development of an English-speaking, British-American nationality.[68] But while born in Ulster, McCarthy was not an Orangeman. Nor was his opposition to separate schools articulated in anti-Catholic terms. Instead, he stressed the need for linguistic and thus national uniformity, asserting that "it is not religion which is at the bottom of the matter but...race feeling."[69] This underpinned a centralist idea of Confederation in which the Dominion Government, as historian J.R. Miller explained, could "counteract the unassimilable French-Canadian nationalists of Quebec...in the assertion of their right to remain a distinct 'race' in Canada."[70] Yet McCarthy conceded that the racial divide might in principle be overcome: "I hope and look forward...for some large-minded Frenchman who will come out among

[65] LP/C-740/3801-2, Willison to Laurier, 7 July 1895.
[66] JDP/M-73, newspaper clipping enclosed in Laurier to Dafoe, 17 February 1896.
[67] Goldwin Smith, "The Manitoba Schools Question," *The Forum* 21 (1896), p. 66.
[68] J.R. Miller, "D'Alton McCarthy, Equal Rights, and the Origins of the Manitoba Schools Question," *CHR* 54:4 (1973), pp. 369-92.
[69] Quoted in Fred Landon, "D'Alton McCarthy and the Politics of the Later 'Eighties," *RCHA* 11:1 (1932), p. 46; J.R. Miller, "As a Politician He is a Great Enigma': The Social and Political Ideas of D'Alton McCarthy," *CHR* 58:4 (1977), pp. 412-16.
[70] Miller, "Manitoba Schools Question," p. 378.

the people of his Province...[and] say, 'I am for British nationality and will endeavor to bring my people into line for a British country.'"[71]

The Protestant Protective Association (PPA), by contrast, an American group that expanded into southwestern Ontario from 1893-6, was uncompromisingly anti-Catholic. Specifically, they objected to Conservative cooperation with Roman Catholics who they regarded as "unfit to hold military or political office."[72] The PPA, as Laurier noted, was both illiberal and anti-Liberal: it appealed to "race and creed hatred" and attacked Ontario Liberals as "unduly subservient to the Roman Catholic Church."[73] The Ontario Grit tradition, of course, was itself anti-clerical, though this derived more from support for the separation of church and state than anti-Catholic bigotry. Indeed, Oliver Mowat assiduously cultivated Ontario's Catholics while the *Globe* defended civil and religious liberties.[74] As Willison reported to Laurier: "the Tory party in Ontario has been steadily educated in hatred of Catholics...there can be no alliance between P.P.A.-ism and Liberalism[.]"[75] Opposing the PPA, Laurier agreed, meant defending "true liberalism[.]"[76]

Though McCarthy and the PPA represented a "schism in the Tory party" over Catholic schools, they were nonetheless ideologically distinct.[77] The latter was strongly nativist and limited in its appeal to ultra-protestant Conservatives, whereas McCarthy's secular, racialist position poached Liberal as well as Conservative support.[78] As Laurier observed: "I rather believe that the radical policy of McCarthy on no separate schools...no listening to the complaints of the minority, has captured our people."[79] "There is no doubt," Willison agreed, "that Mr. McCarthy's position on the School question is very popular in Ontario."[80] It is mistaken, however, to see Conservative arguments

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[71] McCarthy, *Great Speech*, p. 30.
[72] James Watt, "Anti-Catholic Nativism in Canada: The Protestant Protective Association," *CHR* 48:1 (1967), p. 48.
[73] LP/C-739/2824, Laurier to Mowat (draft), 29 January 1894; Grant, *Principal Grant*, p. 366.
[74] Clippingdale, *Willison*, p. 87.
[75] WP/24/179/17723-4, Willison to Laurier (copy), 1 April 1895.
[76] LP/C-739/2829, Laurier note re: PPA, n.d.
[77] LP/C-739/2681, Willison to Laurier, 13 November 1893.
[78] LP/C-739/2679-82, Willison to Laurier, 13 November 1893.
[79] WP/24/179/17776-7, Laurier to Willison, 26 December 1895.
[80] LP/C-740/3933, Willison to Laurier, 29 December 1895.

against separate Catholic schools in terms of Ontario's 'provincial rights' tradition. On one hand, ultra-protestants, as Goldwin Smith noted, simply refused to "enforce on their co-religionists in Manitoba, for the benefit of Roman Catholics, a system of Separate schools."[81] On the other, Willison derided the opportunism of McCarthy's movement, which "began in an agitation to force the disallowance of an act of the Quebec Legislature...[and] ended in an agitation to prevent interference with an act of the Manitoba legislature."[82] Conservative opponents of remedial action, therefore, advocated the use of federal power to uphold a protestant and Anglo-Saxonist racial ascendancy.

III

Most Ontario liberals, conversely, subscribed to a broad 'Gladstonian' idea of British citizenship that raised constitutionalism and liberal principles above racial and religious identity. George Brown, for instance, had imagined Canadians as "a people composed of two distinct races, speaking different languages, with religious and social...institutions totally different...all avowing hearty attachment to the British Crown...[and] British institutions."[83] In this vein, Wilfrid Laurier asked French-Canadians to remember that, "We are British subjects and...are governed by a constitution, which has been the source of all the liberties of the modern world."[84] In North America, however, Canada's "heterogeneous population...scattered over a vast territory" meant that "a federative union is the only one which can secure civil and political liberty."[85] This 'British-American' combination of federalism and British constitutionalism thus enabled two competing liberal arguments over the schools question, each claiming to uphold the "British, Reform, democratic Ontario" tradition[86]: one that emphasised majority rule and local self-government; another that prioritised minority rights and racial conciliation.

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[81] Smith, "The Manitoba Schools Question," p. 73.
[82] Willison, *Laurier*, II, p. 201.
[83] George Brown, "Confederation Resolutions," in *Hon. George Brown*, p. 301.
[84] Laurier, "Mr. Laurier, Leader of the Canadian Liberal Party," pp. 361.
[85] Ibid., p. 365.
[86] Bothwell, *Ontario*, p. 95.

The first derived from the Grit tradition of egalitarian and even quasi-republican democracy, and John Willison, as editor of the Toronto *Globe*, was its leading spokesman. Indeed, throughout the 'Laurier era' he defended the right of the Anglo majority outside Quebec to implement its democratic will on questions of language and education. "The French population constitutes nearly one-third of the...country," he wrote, and it was essential to cultivate

> unity between the French and English elements...The British North America Act clearly provides that French and English shall have equal status in Quebec, in the House of Commons and Senate[,] and in Federal courts and documents...[but] outside of Quebec French has no equal constitutional status with English. What recognition French may obtain elsewhere is by consent and not by right or privilege.[87]

Catholic schools, however, raised a separate issue. As part of the Confederation bargain George Brown had acquiesced to constitutional guarantees for publicly-funded Catholic, though not Francophone, schools in Ontario and obtained similar protections for protestant, *de facto* secular, schools in Quebec.[88] Willison, though, argued that this bargain did not extend to the new provinces of the North-West - a view seemingly endorsed by the Privy Council. "One language and a system of national schools," the *Globe* commented "are the true conditions for the development of a national sentiment, and while it is not proposed to violate the compromise which is at the basis of the Confederation...it is the common hope that outside the two old Provinces, one language and national schools will prevail."[89]

But Willison did not equate Britishness entirely with Anglo-Saxonism, nor did he aim to assimilate Quebec or even necessarily abolish separate schools. French-Canadians, he claimed, "look to the British flag as the symbol of the covenant which secures...their language, their religion, and their local institutions. To put this population under attack and threaten it with...violation of constitutional guarantees is surely repugnant...to the spirit of British institutions."[90] Instead, Willison saw Confederation in 'Grit' terms as an Anglo-French enterprise with provincial autonomy at its

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[87] Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 270-71.
[88] Careless, *Brown*, II, p. 233
[89] *TG*, 21 March 1892.
[90] Willison, *Laurier*, II, p. 56.

foundation. The implication was that Quebec, as the only majority French-Catholic province, was the bastion of French Canadianism, while other provinces were subject to Anglo majority rule.[91] This distinction between Grit and Anglo-Saxonist views of the schools question was encapsulated in the *Globe*'s line: "Provincial Rights, not Protestantism."[92] Though the Empire's highest tribunal affirmed the Dominion's right to overturn provincial law and restore separate schools, Willison nonetheless contended that

> the doctrine of provincial rights has a very strong application...and if it were not for the sectarian issue involved, I do not believe that anyone would counsel interference in Manitoba. I do not object at all to Separate Schools for Manitoba. I would be quite willing that they should be re-established tomorrow...But Manitoba has taken a course, and so long as she chooses to adhere to that course interference from Ottawa...will be futile and mischievous, possibly disastrous.[93]

On these grounds, Willison pledged "to oppose as moderately and judiciously as may be, interference by the Federal power in Manitoba."[94] Though Laurier praised the *Globe*'s "moderation...and view to conciliation,"[95] some Liberals feared that it was playing "into McCarthy's hands" by inciting protestants and alienating Catholics.[96] Other commentators warned of reprisals on Quebec's Anglo-minority.[97] But Willison's stand garnered significant support. "Some of our friends," Richard Cartwright reminded Laurier, "fail to remember that there is a Protestant sentiment quite apart from the Orange one...This is strongly with Manitoba and is voiced by such men as...Principal Grant...In Ontario they far outnumber the Catholics and are largely with us."[98] Indeed, G.M. Grant lauded the *Globe*'s moderate position in defence of provincial autonomy and even travelled to Manitoba to report on the situation.[99] "It was a great comfort to me - though some of 'the party' were troubled I am sure," he wrote to Willison, "when you came out...so fairly [and]

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[91] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 270.
[92] WP/17/130/12193, G.M. Grant to Willison, 18 March 1895.
[93] WP/24/179/17723, Willison to Laurier (copy), 1 April 1895.
[94] LP/C-739/3680, Willison to Laurier, 22 March 1895.
[95] WP/24/179/17738, Laurier to Willison, 29 July 1895.
[96] LP/C-739/3726-9, Mills to Laurier, 28 March 1895. See also Ross-Laurier correspondence, 27 February and 2 March 1895 in Colquhoun, *Willison*, pp. 47-8.
[97] *The Week*, 14 February 1896, p. 274.
[98] LP/C-739/3718, Cartwright to Laurier, 25 March 1895 (emphasis in original).
[99] WP/17130/12198-9, G.M. Grant to Willison, 26 July 1895; Grant, *Principal Grant*, pp. 368-9.

with such moderation of language."[100] "Of course the R.C.s [Roman Catholics] have a grievance, but it is Manitoba that should remedy it."[101] John Dafoe took a similar view. "Manitoba has passed a law which is within her prerogative and is acceptable to ninety-five per cent of her people," he wrote in the Toronto *Week*. Though the Dominion might intervene to prevent "tyranny by the majority," it was justified "only...when no other solution...is possible." The alternative was "a religious war, [and] a conflict between a Province and the Dominion...with the connivance and assistance of Ontario."[102]

The second, minority liberal position on the schools question was represented by John Ewart and might be called 'Whig constitutionalism.' This upheld established constitutional conventions against popular sovereignty.[103] When the schools question broke in 1890, Ewart - the Toronto-trained lawyer who represented Louis Riel in 1885 - again defended the French-Catholic minority.[104] He was moved, in part, by the patriotic aims of Canada First and believed that the Dominion's "dual race origin, emphasized...by a concurring line of religious difference," was the most serious obstacle to nation-building and national unity.[105] The solution was to cultivate a "political rather than ethnographical" view of nationhood.[106] Canadians, Ewart maintained, had to realise that "in a community in which three-fifths are English and Protestant, and two-fifths French and Catholic...accommodations...toleration, friendliness and sympathy must characterise their political and social relations...unification through intolerance, and contempt and compulsion, is a foolish fantasy."[107] His arguments, moreover, were grounded in British and Ontarian political languages; he invoked John Stuart Mill's defence of minority rights as well as George Brown's compromise over

[100] WP/17/130/12193, G.M. Grant to Willison, 18 March 1895.
[101] WP/17/130/12197, G.M. Grant to Willison, 28 June 1895.
[102] *The Week*, 7 February 1896, p. 267.
[103] Paul Romney, "From Constitutionalism to Legalism: Trial by Jury, Responsible Government, and the Rule of Law in Canadian Political Culture," *Law and History Review* 7:1 (1989), pp. 121-74.
[104] Cole, "John S. Ewart," pp. 62-3.
[105] John Ewart, *Report of the Canadian Club of Winnipeg together with the Inaugural Address of the First President Mr. J.S. Ewart, K.C.* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Telegram, 1906), p. 14.
[106] John Ewart, *The Kingdom of Canada, Imperial Federation, the Colonial Conference, the Alaska Boundary, and Other Essays* (Toronto: Morang, 1908), p. 5;
[107] John Ewart, *The Manitoba School Question: A Reply to Mr. Wade* (Winnipeg: The Manitoba Free Press Co., 1895), p. 41.

separate schools in Ontario.[108] But where Ewart diverged from other liberals was in asserting not only the *right* of federal intervention in Manitoba, but positively arguing that "Catholics' rights, guaranteed by constitutional compact," *demanded* remedial action.[109] "Let us," he pleaded, "as British subjects, be governed by our constitution."[110]

Historians have explained Ewart's position in two ways. First, Douglas Cole and Paul Romney pointed to his "appreciation of British political virtues...an orderly liberty rooted in the rule of law."[111] Yet the British origins of Ewart's liberalism hardly distinguished him from his liberal contemporaries. Here Romney argued that Ewart was involved in a broader "departure from the Reform tradition...[towards] a centralist compact theory [of Confederation], which saw Ottawa as the protector of minority rights."[112] Though Ewart endorsed decentralisation in principle, in practice his view of Confederation increasingly envisaged Ottawa as the guarantor of Dominion nation-building against racial prejudice, a position that dovetailed with the tolerant 'Whig' tradition of Edward Blake and Oliver Mowat.[113] For other liberals, however, local autonomy and democracy took precedence. Historian Ramsay Cook's observation that John Dafoe was "a democrat...prepared to see the minority coerced by the will of the majority," in fact characterised Grit liberal orthodoxy. This position served the interests of the Anglo-Saxon majority, though it was supported by political and constitutional rather than explicitly racial or religious arguments. The discursive boundaries of a liberal, Gladstonian 'Britishness' thus accommodated constitutional arguments for both majority rule and minority rights. But the central question, even the key danger, in Canadian politics was the point at which democratic 'majority rule' crossed into the tyranny of the Anglo-Canadian majority over the French-Canadian minority.

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[108] John Ewart, *An Open Letter to the Hon. Thos. Greenway on the School Question in Manitoba* (n.p., 2 January 1892), pp. 3, 5.
[109] John Ewart, *Lecture on the Manitoba School Question* (Winnipeg, 29 April 1895), p. 14.
[110] Ewart, *Lecture*, p. 15.
[111] Romney, *Getting it Wrong*, p. 195; Cole, "John S. Ewart," p. 64.
[112] Romney, *Getting it Wrong*, pp. 200-208.
[113] LP/C-754/209075, Ewart to Laurier, memo (copy), n.d. (1898?); Cole, "The Better Patriot," p. 68.

IV

In this context, Laurier faced significant pressure from the Grit majority to uphold Manitoba's abolition of separate schools. The alternative was ideologically unsound and threatened to alienate Liberal voters, fuelling populist movements while the Conservatives were weak and divided.[114] "I suppose you will consider...adhering strongly to Provincial rights," Willison counseled:

> on that policy strongly presented, we could very nearly if not certainly carry the country...we could carry say 60 seats in Ontario...[and] absolutely every seat in Manitoba and the North West, except Provencher...What could we do in Quebec? Could we carry 10 or 15 seats there? If so we would either secure the government or make it impossible for the Conservative party to govern.[115]

The key, Willison reiterated, was to "avoid any declaration in favour of remedial legislation...the Liberals are gaining in Ontario steadily and...nothing can save the Tories if you can maintain your present ground."[116] In Quebec, however, the powerful Catholic hierarchy demanded remedial action while *Quebecois* Liberals, too, pressured Laurier to defend the 'French race.' Joseph Israel Tarte (1848-1907), his chief Quebec organiser, notably disparaged Willison and the *Globe* for "n'ont 'dautre horizons que celui de Toronto," and as "diminuitifs de George Brown, dont ils ont - grâce à Dieu - ni la force, ni la talent."[117] Tarte, Willison retorted, "professes to speak with authority on a situation in Ontario of which he is profoundly ignorant."[118]

Even within his own party, therefore, Laurier was "battered between the prejudices of Quebec [and] the prejudices of Ontario."[119] But he was also caught up in a debate *between* Ontario liberals. On one side, his alliance with the Grit majority depended upon a shared commitment to 'provincial rights' against the centralising tendencies of the Conservatives. In Toronto in 1889, for instance, Laurier condemned Ottawa's power to disallow provincial law as inimical to federalism and "the greatest danger to Confederation to-day."[120] But on the other, he naturally aligned with the Whig minority, including Blake, Ewart, and later O.D. Skelton, on the critical issue of racial

[114] Cartwright, *Reminiscences*, pp. 337-9, 344-5.
[115] LP/C-739/3680, Willison to Laurier, 22 March 1895.
[116] LP/C-740/3802, Willison to Laurier, 7 July 1895.
[117] LP/C-739/2880, Tarte to Laurier, 17 January 1894.
[118] LP/C-739/2822, Willison to Laurier, 29 January 1894.
[119] WP/24/179, Laurier to Willison, 17 December 1895.
[120] Laurier, "Speech...at Toronto," p. 557.

conciliation. This tension was apparent in his assessment of the schools question, where he argued that there was neither a clear legal basis for 'provincial rights' nor an imperative for Dominion intervention. "In this Manitoba school question," he wrote to Willison:

> You view it from the point of view of Provincial Rights...[But] [d]oes not the constitution expressly declare that in matters of education the Provincial Legislature shall have exclusive jurisdiction, except...where a system of separate schools exists, an appeal shall be given to the minority[?]...I grant you that this right of appeal is to be sparingly exercised, and [only] for cause adequate, but to deny is absolutely is inadmissible, and to grant it of right is equally inadmissible. The appeal should be granted or rejected according to the circumstances of each case.[121]

In this case, Laurier shared Ewart's "desire to see [the schools question] settled in a way that will give satisfaction to the minority."[122] But he also recognised that most 'Greater Ontario' liberals strongly opposed federal intervention. A "Remedial measure," Laurier concluded, "is simply abortive. It can give no help to the minority, whilst there is enough to irritate the majority, and further complicate matters."[123] Instead, he deployed the rhetoric of racial conciliation. As he told an Ontario crowd: "the government...have blown and raged and threatened...If it were in my power, I would try the sunny way...asking [Manitoba] to be just...to the minority, in order that we may have peace among all the creeds and races...of our common country."[124]

But despite Willison's assurance that there was no evidence that "the fact that you are a Catholic and are French is a weakening factor in Ontario," Laurier doubted whether conciliation would succeed.[125] In Quebec he was denounced by the Conservative press "as a traitor to my race and religion,"[126] while two by-election losses in Ontario signalled that "the grits [*sic*]may not go even to the extent of the conciliation which I have suggested, [and]...will be carried away by the cry of no separate schools[.]"[127] Nonetheless, he resolved: "If we are to have a country at all, we must put down the threats of all factions, [and] appeal...to the nobler sentiments of all Canadians."[128] The

[121] WP/24/179/17719-20, Laurier to Willison, 30 March 1895.
[122] JEP/1/12, Laurier to Ewart (copy), 20 April 1896; LP/C-740/4223c, Laurier to Ewart, 20 April 1896.
[123] JDP/M-73, Laurier to Dafoe, 17 February 1896.
[124] Quoted in Skelton, *Laurier*, I, p. 464.
[125] LP/C-740/3932, Willison to Laurier, 29 December 1895.
[126] WP/24/179/17866, Laurier to Willison, 30 December 1895.
[127] WP/24/179/17807-8, Laurier to Willison, 30 December 1895.
[128] WP/24/179/17784-5, Laurier to Willison, 22 February 1896.

centrepiece of the 1896 Liberal campaign was thus a negotiated solution to the schools question. To French-Canadians Laurier argued that Manitoba's Catholics were better served by negotiation than coercion, while in Ontario the Liberals emphasised provincial rights.[129] The result was a decisive Liberal victory that soothed racial tensions and helped to consolidate Confederation. French-Canadians defied the Catholic Hierarchy to hand Laurier and the Liberals an unprecedented success in Quebec, and Ontario's "Scotch Presbyterian voters"[130] rallied, as the *Globe* put it, behind "Laurier, Mowat and Victory."[131] The election of the Dominion's first French-Canadian Premier - with significant support in Ontario - represented a stark change from the racial antagonism that dominated the previous decade.

Laurier quickly despatched Tarte and his young protogé Henri Bourassa (1868-1952) to finalise an agreement with Manitoba's Liberal Government, led by Thomas Greenway (1838-1908) and Clifford Sifton (1861-1929).[132] The latter, born near London, Ontario and educated at Victoria College, Toronto, was an Ontario emigrant of Irish Protestant and Grit liberal background, tipped as Minister of the Interior and the West's representative in the Dominion Cabinet.[133] His appointment, however, was contingent on the settlement of the schools question.[134] The resulting 'Laurier-Greenway Compromise,' agreed in November 1896, approved three concessions to the minority: first, it sanctioned limited religious instruction, subject to number of caveats including student numbers, parental opinion, and the time, place, and non-compulsory nature of the teaching; second, where numbers warranted it authorised the employment of "at least one duly certified Roman Catholic...[or] non-Roman Catholic teacher"; and third, it made provision for bilingual instruction.[135]

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[129] Skelton, *Laurier*, I, p. 469.
[130] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 7.
[131] *TG*, 1 June 1896.
[132] Neatby, *Laurier*, pp. 82-3.
[133] Dafoe, *Sifton*, pp. 6-10, 96.
[134] LP/C-742/6622-7, Willison to Sifton (copy), Sifton to Laurier, 17 and 18 August, 1896, C-744/8635-8, Sifton to Laurier, 9 November 1896.
[135] LP/C-744/8635-8, 'Memorandum re: settlement of school question,' enclosed in Sifton to Laurier, 9 November 1896. See also Skelton, *Laurier*, II, pp. 16-17.

Though Laurier maintained that the "majority of the minority" supported the compromise it was nevertheless denounced by the Catholic Hierarchy and he faced a prolonged intra-Catholic fight among French-Canadians.[136] As he later confided to W.D. Gregory, the settlement "imposed upon my friends from Quebec what was to them at the time a difficult task."[137] In Ontario, meanwhile, the *Globe* proclaimed that "There will be No Coercion Under Laurier":

> The principle of Provincial autonomy has been maintained. There will be no Federal legislation, no Federal interference of any kind...The national character of the schools has been maintained; Protestant and Catholic children will be taught side by side.[138]

Despite disagreement among historians over the significance of 'provincial rights' to Laurier's political calculus, Grit liberals clearly regarded the settlement as a "vindication" of their position.[139] Willison, for instance, admitted that the Liberal leader "could not argue the [schools] question as one of abstract provincial rights,"[140] yet believed that Laurier showed "devotion to the federal principle and...resolute resistance to clerical interference in education."[141] Richard Cartwright similarly claimed that Laurier "point[ed] out that the question of provincial rights...was or might be seriously endangered if the Dominion Government interfered with Manitoba in this matter[.]"[142] But John Ewart and G.M. Grant, notwithstanding their support for Laurier's conciliatory approach, were disappointed that the concessions did not go further.[143] Ewart, though, remained an interlocutor between Laurier and the Manitoba clergy while Grant, who did "not regard Laurier's settlement as at all a happy compromise," refused to support its clerical opponents.[144] Whig liberal dissatisfaction, in short, did not shake their support for Laurier.

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[136] LP/C-765/32859, Ewart to Laurier, 22 April 1899; See Neatby, *Laurier*, ch. 6.
[137] LP/C-882/162098, Laurier to Gregory (copy), 23 November 1909.
[138] *TG*, 21 November 1896.
[139] Dafoe, *Sifton*, pp. 96. See for example Creighton, *Canada's First Century*, pp. 79-85, and Lower, *Colony to Nation*, pp. 400-401.
[140] Willison, *Laurier*, II, p. 216.
[141] Willison to G. Beer, 29 November 1912, quoted in Colquhoun, *Willison*, p. 85.
[142] Cartwright, *Reminiscences*, p. 346.
[143] LP/C-741/5433, Ewart to Laurier, 9 July 1896; WP/17/130/12203, G.M. Grant to Willison, 6 January 1896; Cole, "John S. Ewart," p. 63.
[144] Grant, *Principal Grant*, p. 370; LP/C-765/32859-66, Laurier to Ewart (copy), Ewart to Laurier, 14 and 22 April 1899.

On the whole, therefore, Willison rightly concluded that the settlement gave "the most complete satisfaction to [Ontario's] Protestant population...the Government is holding all who voted with it...and making new friends among Protestant Conservatives."[145] Perhaps the most remarkable was D'Alton McCarthy, who lauded the "reasonable and satisfactory compromise."[146] Indeed, McCarthy maintained a congenial relationship with Clifford Sifton and gave Laurier "fair and honourable support" prior to his death in 1898.[147] The settlement evidently convinced McCarthy that Laurier, though a French-Canadian, was sufficiently committed to Canada's future as a 'British nation.' The Laurier-Greenway Compromise, combined with the changes to Liberal trade policy discussed below in chapter five, thus prompted a significant political shift in Ontario. Endorsements from conservative Anglo-Saxonists and imperialists illustrated how Laurier broadened his Liberal 'consensus' without alienating his core supporters. Among the keys to this 'broad church' Liberalism was that Laurier presented himself as a Britannic nationalist. His language, which reflected a 'Gladstonian' conception of Britishness, united Grit and Whig liberals in Ontario along with leading Conservatives and imperialists. It is especially revealing that by 1897 both John Ewart and D'Alton McCarthy, the legal antagonists over the schools question, supported Laurier's Liberal Government. But the Compromise also effectively ratified the Anglo-ascendancy in Manitoba. Though the concessions undoubtedly improved the position of the French-Catholic minority and alleviated the immediate political crisis, over the long-term the schools settlement marked the institutional foundation of a 'neo-Ontarian' Prairie West. When another schools question arose in Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1904-5 it was decided in light of the Manitoba precedent and in the context of a new debate over the 'explosive colonisation' of Ontario's empire.

The Two Races and the Empire

I

[145] LP/C-745/9741, Willison to Laurier, 13 December 1896.
[146] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 19.
[147] LP/C-746/11607, Laurier to McCarthy (copy), 31 December 1897; Dafoe, *Sifton*, pp. 73-95.

After 1896 racial tensions arose primarily, though not exclusively, in connection with Canada's role in the British Empire. Laurier, as we have seen, envisaged the Empire's future as an association of independent 'British nations,' though his advocacy of this 'Gladstonian' Greater Britain was complicated by the racial divide. "If there were only French Canadians in Confederation," he told a Quebec Liberal in 1892, "I would not hesitate a single instant, but the idea [Canadian independence] is not yet ripe enough for the English population, and...we must have strong support from friends of both races."[148] The rise of 'constructive imperialism,' however, forced Laurier to change tack, and his rhetoric at the 1897 Jubilee and Colonial Conference in London reflected the new political context. "[I]t would be the proudest moment of my life," he declared, "if I could see a Canadian of French descent affirming the principles of freedom in the parliament of Great Britain."[149] This language especially appealed to Canada First imperialists like G.M. Grant and George Denison who sought to reconcile Canadian and imperial unity. It also drew upon a long tradition of French-Canadian Imperial loyalism that saw the British connection as a guarantor against Anglo-Canadian and American encroachment.[150] But Willison's Toronto *Globe* perhaps best illustrated the newly assertive Britannic nationalism symbolised by Laurier's presence in London. The "stolid Anglo-Saxon community" of "Toronto was never more completely abandoned to...a patriotic celebration," it reported, adding with evident pride that "the fact that...Canada's Premier...is a Frenchman and a Catholic appealed to [the] English imagination."[151]

Laurier's soaring rhetoric, though, soon encountered political reality. While it was easy to exalt the freedom enjoyed by "the descendants of France on the continent of America under the British flag," French-Canadians had little evident interest in Britain's global empire.[152] Anglo-Saxonism and British 'race patriotism' repelled French-Canadians, and "the 'pan-Anglo-Saxon' idea," as historian Mason Wade insightfully noted, "stimulated French-Canadian nationalism with its strong

[148] Quoted in Neatby, *Laurier*, p. 102.
[149] Quoted in Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 72.
[150] Ramsay Cook, *Watching Quebec: Selected Essays* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), p. 188; Wade, *The French Canadians*, p. 249.
[151] *TG*, 24 June 1897.
[152] Quoted in *TG*, 6 October 1897.

tendency toward isolationism."[153] Yet during the 1900s and 1910s Ontario liberals sought to downplay racialism in favour of 'Gladstonian' or civic conceptions of Britishness that might include, and appeal to, French-Canadians. Liberals, moreover, were divided over the political implications of Quebec's seemingly ambiguous place in the British world. This section thus presages the analysis of imperial and international affairs in chapter six by outlining how Ontario liberals viewed, as Henri Bourassa's 1902 article put it, 'The French-Canadian in the British Empire.'[154]

II

The outbreak of the South African War (1899-1902) both initiated and exemplified the racial divide over imperialism during the 'Laurier era.' While Ontarians largely rallied to the British cause French-Canadians were overwhelmingly opposed, identifying with the Boers as a non-Anglo minority within the Empire.[155] When Laurier authorised the deployment of a contingent - without parliamentary approval, though slower than some imperialists demanded - Canada's latent racial antagonism revived. Henri Bourassa's resignation from Parliament, his vociferous attacks on the war, and his subsequent re-election by acclamation reflected strong French-Canadian opposition, and Anglo and French-Canadian students clashed on the streets of Montréal.[156] Meanwhile in Ontario, the Conservative press saw Laurier's hesitation over Canadian involvement as evidence of a surrender to French-Canada.[157] Politicians, George Parkin argued, were "playing their game to capture Quebec. I am really ashamed...[and] I blame Laurier very much[.]"[158] Nonetheless, he admitted to Alfred Milner: "It has been a great blessing that Wilfrid Laurier has been in power through this crisis. The

[153] Wade, *The French Canadians,* pp. 447-8.
[154] Bourassa, "The French-Canadian in the British Empire," pp. 53-68.
[155] Stacey, *Age of Conflict,* I, p. 72; Robert J.D. Page, "Canada and the Empire during Joseph Chamberlain's Tenure as Colonial Secretary, 1895-1903," Unpublished DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, p. 406.
[156] LP/C-758/37997-8, Bourassa to Laurier, 18 October 1899; Neatby, *Laurier*, pp. 106-119; Carman Miller, "The Montreal Flag Riot of 1900," in John Crawford and Ian McGibbon (eds.), *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue: New Zealand, the British Empire, and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003), ch. 11.
[157] WP/24/179/17910, Laurier to Willison, 14 October 1899
[158] WP/32/243/24132, Parkin to Pattison, 21 March 1902.

Frenchmen who vote for him are practically endorsing the Imperial steps...into which he has been forced by public opinion."[159]

Canada First imperialists, however, expressed concern for national unity. When Laurier explained to George Denison that in Quebec there was "a growing restiveness on the subject of imperialism, which has been caused by too zealous friends...[and] may be unknown in Ontario," Denison was accommodative.[160] "I am sorry to hear that there is a restlessness in the Province of Quebec," he responded. "I will, as we soldiers say, 'mark time' for the present...if we give our comrades in Quebec time to consider carefully...it will all come right."[161] G.M. Grant similarly emphasised racial sympathy: "Instead of wondering that French-speaking Canadians are not as enthusiastic in this war as their English-speaking countrymen, the marvel is that their representative men have as a rule spoken so warmly on behalf of the Empire[.]"[162]

John Willison, who was a leading liberal advocate for intervention in South Africa, shared Denison and Grant's concern for racial unity. Despite his growing imperialism, he wrote to Laurier: "I quite recognize your difficulties and...have endeavoured to preserve a strictly sympathetic attitude toward Quebec and the French-Canadians."[163] This was apparent in his treatment of Henri Bourassa. "Let me thank you," Bourassa wrote to Willison, "for the fair way in which you have spoken of my resignation...[and] in placing myself right before the people of Ontario."[164] Conversely, Willison noted that George Parkin had attacked the *Globe* "for being afraid of the vote of Quebec." "I do not think Parkin is acting wisely," he wrote to Denison, "in...practically setting up the doctrine that when Quebec disagrees with Ontario she must be flogged into submission."[165] He further reproached Parkin:

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[159] AMP/180/217, Parkin to Milner, 18 January 1901.
[160] GDP/9-10/3888, Laurier to Denison, 6 December 1899.
[161] LP/C-372/225437-9, Denison to Laurier, 9 December 1899; GDP/9-10/3894-6, Denison to Laurier (draft), 9 December 1899.
[162] Grant, "Current Events," *QQ* 7:3 (1900), p. 256.
[163] LP/C-772/41211, Willison to Laurier, 17 January 1900.
[164] WP/ 5/34/2893-4, Bourassa to Willison, 30 November 1899.
[165] GDP/11-12/4622, Willison to Denison, 16 May 1902.

> For ten years Sir Wilfrid Laurier has fought his own province...[and] received practically no sympathy from the imperialists of Ontario...It was no easy task for Sir Wilfrid to reconcile Quebec to participation in imperial wars...What I think we Liberals have a right to expect is...some gratitude to a man who has done his full duty under very difficult circumstances.[166]

Though they denied Quebec a *de facto* veto over imperial affairs, Ontario's emergent liberal imperialists affirmed the importance of conciliating French-Canada and approaching imperial questions from a civic rather than primarily racial perspective. But this 'Gladstonian' concern for national unity sat uneasily alongside Anglo-Saxonism and British 'race patriotism.'

Concurrently, an anti-imperial alliance developed between Goldwin Smith and Henri Bourassa. Though Smith regarded French-Canada as an obstacle to North American and thus Anglo-Saxon unity he quickly discovered that French-Canadians shared his anti-imperialism.[167] The French-Canadians, he asserted, followed Laurier "because he is French...But their sentiments about the war and Imperialism generally are represented not by Laurier but by Bourassa."[168] The latter was "a man of proven ability and...serious courage. Almost alone he has stood against the storm of imperialist fanaticism."[169] For his part, Bourassa deprecated "militarism and jingoism," and appreciated Smith's "approbation, coming from such a high and disinterested authority."[170] He even suggested a joint anti-war movement, and Smith provided introductions to British liberals for Bourassa's journey to London in 1901.[171] But whereas Smith indicted Laurier as an "unscrupulous opportunist," Bourassa was more sympathetic.[172] "I must say," he wrote, "to be fair, the dread of creating a racial animosity between the French [and] English populations of Canada...is, no doubt, what appealed most strongly to Sir Wilfrid Laurier - and it is a higher motive than personal ambition and self-interest."[173] Indeed, as Laurier wrote to Bourassa following his resignation, it was necessary for French-Canadians to "marchent à la tête de la Confederation," and choose between "l'impérialisme anglais, ou

[166] WP/32/243/24133-5, Willison to Parkin (draft), 2 June 1902.
[167] JBP/16/109, Smith to Bryce, 3 December 1899.
[168] JBP/16/161, Smith to Bryce, 23 April 1901.
[169] JBP/16/180, Smith to Bryce, 2 June 1902.
[170] GSP/M-2190/Bourassa to Smith, 20 January 1900.
[171] HBP/M-721, Smith to Bourassa (copy), 2 June 1901; WDGP/2/1901, Smith to Bourassa, 2 June 1901; GSP/M-2190/Bourassa to Smith, 17 May 1900.
[172] JBP/16/160, Smith to Bryce, 23 April 1901.
[173] GSP/M-2190, Bourassa to Smith, 20 January 1900.

l'impérialisme américain. Je ne vois pas d'autre alternative."[174] But the irony, Bourassa noted, was that Laurier's policy had itself stoked racial conflict: "Here is a liberal government, brought to power under the flag of national pacification and harmony...playing into the hands of...[the] imperialists - and this, because they are afraid of being called a French dominated and priest-ridden government."[175] "I have thought all along," Smith wrote similarly, "that the effect of the Jingo policy would be, instead of sealing the union of the races, to revive their division; and so it is."[176]

Historian Craig Brown, however, rightly noted that Smith's Anglo-Saxonism and 'annexationism' limited his practical cooperation with Bourassa, a proud French-Canadian, Catholic, and Canadian nationalist who rejected both out of hand.[177] Even immediate independence, Bourassa believed, threatened "moral absorption, at least, by the United States."[178] Smith's dream of continental and Anglo-Saxon unity was fundamentally irreconcilable with Bourassa's main objective: defending French-Canada within Confederation. But Brown's account overlooked three important details. The first was a modest evolution in Smith's views towards French-Canada, which was "doing us excellent service as a drag on...Imperialist and Militarist ambition."[179] Indeed, he lauded its "lively movement...in defence of self government,"[180] and ultimately concluded that "French-Canadians are content with British institutions."[181] This leads to the second point: Bourassa's adherence to a liberal conception of 'Britishness.'[182] In fact, he claimed the mantle of "a loyal British subject, a thorough Canadian and a constitutional Liberal....a Liberal of the British school...a disciple of Burke, Fox, Bright, Gladstone, and of the other Little Englanders who made Great Britain and her possessions what they are[.]"[183] This involved a sharp distinction between Britishness and imperialism that

[174] HBP/M-722, Laurier to Bourassa, 2 November 1899.
[175] GSP/M-2190, Bourassa to Smith, 20 January 1900.
[176] GSP/M-2190, Smith to Mount Stephen, 12 March 1900.
[177] Craig Brown, "Goldwin Smith and Anti-Imperialism," *CHR* 43:2 (1962), p. 104-5.
[178] AMP/39/9-10, Bourassa to Milner, 7 October 1912 (emphasis in original).
[179] HBP/M-721, Smith to Bourassa, 19 May 1905.
[180] WDGP/2/1903, Smith to the Sydney Bulletin (copy), 24 September 1903.
[181] Goldwin Smith, "Canada, The Empire, and Mr. Chamberlain," *MR* 13 (1903), p. 40.
[182] Contrary to Underhill's claim that 'Britishness' "was always rejected by the French-Canadian part of the [Canadian] community." Underhill, "Foreword," p. xvi.
[183] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 13 March 1900; Réal Bélanger, Henri *Bourassa: le fascinant destin d'un homme libre,1868-1914* (Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2013), p. 74.

characterised Bourassa's thought throughout the 'Laurier era.' Finally, though Smith and Bourassa failed to form an independent anti-imperial movement, their correspondence anticipated the liberal autonomists who emerged following the war. Though separate from Bourassa's new Quebec *Nationaliste* movement they too regarded imperialism as a threat to national unity.

III

Liberal imperialists and autonomists alike thus sought, to some extent, to conciliate French-Canadians and imagined that they could subscribe to a 'Gladstonian' idea of Britishness. Of course, liberals did not eschew the language of 'race' nor were Canada's 'Two Solitudes' effectively bridged. On the contrary, as W.D. Gregory lamented in 1913: "How discouraging is this constant conflict of races! I sometimes despair for the future unity of our country."[184] The racial divide over imperialism, then, went far deeper than any particular individual, dispute, or event. Indeed, as historian Colin Coates writes: "For most French Canadians, the ties to the British Empire led only to England, if at all, and not elsewhere around the globe...[they] saw little to gain from a larger imperial stage."[185] Moreover, Robert Bothwell contends that French-Canadians and liberal autonomists essentially agreed that imperialism "responded to Britain's needs and not to Canada's...Remove the empire and, perhaps, a real sense of a common Canada would finally emerge."[186]

This was certainly Bourassa's view. French-Canadians, he argued, were "thoroughly and exclusively Canadian," whereas Anglo-Canadians "still speak of the 'Old Country' as their 'home'...[and] are but partially *Canadianised*." With respect to the British Empire:

> The blood connection and the pride in Imperial power and glory having no claims upon him, what sentiment can [the French-Canadian] be expected to entertain for New Zealand or Australia, South Africa or India...By the motherland he feels that he has done his full duty; by the Empire he does not feel that he has any duty to perform. He makes full allowance for the blood feelings of his English-speaking partner; but having himself, in the past, sacrificed much of his racial tendencies for the sake of Canadian unity, he thinks that the Anglo-Canadian should be prepared to study the problems of Imperialism from a purely Canadian standpoint.[187]

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[184] HBP/M-721, Gregory to Bourassa, 2 October 1913.
[185] Coates, "French Canadians' Ambivalence to the British Empire," pp. 192, 194.
[186] Robert Bothwell, *Canada and Quebec: One Country, Two Histories* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995), p. 55.
[187] Bourassa, "The French-Canadian in the British Empire," pp. 54-9.

But this view, though anti-imperial, was not a rejection of Britishness. On the contrary, Bourassa argued that French-Canadians were "essentially Canadian" yet nonetheless "[p]rofoundly British...by habit, instinct, or reason...From that double point of view...the French Canadian is prepared to make new sacrifices in order to maintain the unity and independence of Canada and its connection with Great Britain[.]"[188] That connection was premised on "the sound principle of decentralization and complete self-government, which has built up the British Empire."[189] Canada, Bourassa maintained, was one of several "self-governing British communities outside of the United Kingdom[.]"[190]

Liberal autonomists equally believed that imperialism diluted the Dominion sentiment required to fuse Anglo and French-Canadians into a common nation. It was on this basis that Bourassa regarded John Ewart as his "English interpreter of nationalism."[191] "We have a difficult problem here in Canada," Ewart argued in the *Kingdom Papers*, "but, if imperialism is not too strong, we shall...unify and nationalize a people - several peoples - whose geographic and ethnographic conditions make for separation."[192] This was critical, he wrote, "to enable English and French, and Protestant and Catholic...to sympathize with each other a little more."[193] O.D. Skelton, too, emphasised that Anglo-French cooperation "may be made strong by frank and cordial partnership or marred and broken by discord."[194] But autonomists were neither 'un-British' nor 'post-racial.' Ewart, for instance, referred to "Anglo-Saxon countries" and "the British race" in his writings,[195] while Skelton regarded Anglos in the United States and across Greater Britain as members of "our race."[196] They agreed, however, that a 'true' conception of Britannic nationalism, derived from the liberal

[188] Bourassa, "The Spectre of Annexation," p. 33.
[189] Canada *House of Commons Debates*, 13 March 1900.
[190] HBP/M-721, Bourassa to Ewart (copy), 17 January 1914.
[191] Ibid., 27 May 1913.
[192] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, I, p. 55.
[193] Ibid., p. 121.
[194] O.D. Skelton, *The Language Issue in Canada* (Kingston: Jackson Press, 1917), p. 25.
[195] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, I, p. 32; *Kingdom Papers*, II, p. 25.
[196] ODSP/9/'Alliance or Centralization (draft, n.d.); Skelton, "Ultimate Politics," p. 79.

traditions of "British freedom,"[197] could reconcile Canada's two races within a 'Gladstonian' Greater Britain of "autonomous and equal states."[198]

This view was reinforced by comparison with other parts of the British world. Two examples will suffice. First, Skelton believed that Dominion autonomy held the key to solving the 'Irish problem.' In fact, the Canada's sectarian divide appeared even more intractable than in Ireland where there was no "difference of race to overcome." The evident solution, he argued, was Dominion status for Ireland - "independence under a common king, the relationship that Canada and Australia are hammering out."[199] This represented the mainstream of Canadian liberal opinion which equated Irish Home Rule to Dominion self-government. Edward Blake, having retired from the Canadian Parliament, served at Westminster as an Irish Nationalist MP from 1892-1907, and Laurier himself maintained that no British subjects appreciated the "the blessings of Home Rule" more than those "of French origin."[200] Second, in 1913 John Ewart travelled to Australia and New Zealand to "see at close range the working of their institution[s] and...the way in which they regard the problems which are harassing us also."[201] He was struck by their racial homogeneity and the late though rapid growth of Britannic nationalism:

> In both countries the population is almost entirely British, and the difficulties...[and] advantages of occupation by two races find no place. I cannot say that the people differentiate their national feeling from what is usually spoken of as imperial feeling...Now, however...the nationalistic feeling which was always strongly latent has rapidly taken form...[though] I cannot say that either country has...any precise constitutional objective...They have no Le Devoir or Kingdom Papers there. One thing is certain, namely, that imperial federation would have no chance of acceptance. A parliament twelve thousand miles away...cannot possibly appeal to peoples in the southern seas.[202]

These observations only confirmed Ewart's view that schemes for imperial centralisation failed to account for the vast political, social, and geographical differences between the 'British nations.' Attempts to impose centralisation would result in the rupture, not only of the British 'connection,'

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[197] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, I, p. 128.
[198] ODSP/9/'Alliance or Centralization (draft, n.d.).
[199] O.D. Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 28:1 (1920), pp. 96-7.
[200] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 22 April 1887; Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, "The Curious Case of the Vanishing Debate over Irish Home Rule: The Dominion of Canada, Irish Home Rule, and Canadian Historiography," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 45:1 (2015), pp. 113-28.
[201] HBP/M-721, Ewart to Bourassa, 4 June 1913.
[202] Ibid., 5 January 1914.

but potentially of Confederation. Indeed, imperialism exposed the Dominion's 'racial' fault-line, and it was on this central point that autonomists trusted Laurier to defend Canadian self-government and thus national unity against imperialism.

IV

As historian Carl Berger illustrated, Victorian imperial federalists romanticised French-Canada even as they dismissed its significance to the Dominion's imperial, Anglo-Saxon future.[203] But the generation of liberal imperialist intellectuals that followed sought - to a certain extent at least - to include French-Canadians as a part of Greater Britain. This reflected the evolution of imperialist ideologies in more liberal directions. Even Alfred Milner, a staunch British 'race patriot,' was conciliatory towards French Canadians. "I am as you know," he wrote to Henri Bourassa, "animated by...the most friendly and respectful feelings towards [French-Canadians], and my Imperialism does not take the form of a militant or aggressive Anglo-Saxondom."[204] In Toronto, liberal imperialists echoed Milner's language and recognised that imperial unity required French-Canadian acquiescence if not enthusiasm. Most notably, George Wrong - whose cottage at Murray Bay, Quebec contributed to his scholarly and cultural interest in French-Canada[205] - aimed to promote "discussion of the French-Canadians" among Anglo-Canadian intellectuals.[206] "Except in the counties bordering...Quebec," he lamented, "English-speaking Canada is barely conscious that Canada is a bi-lingual country[.]" For this reason, Wrong supported Wilfrid Laurier as "the champion of the rights and influence of the French element in Canada."[207]

In practical terms, Wrong promoted bilingualism to strengthen Canadian unity. He was adamant that Anglo-Canadians must not "attempt to deprive the French-speaking people in Canada of any rights to...their language which are guaranteed by the constitution...[and] the Canadian

[203] Berger, *The Sense of Power*, pp. 134-47.
[204] HBP/M-722, Milner to Bourassa, 14 October 1912; AMP/39/22, Milner to Bourassa (copy), 14 October 1912.
[205] See GWP/B2004/0010/006/18.
[206] WLGP/10, Wrong to Grant, 10 November 1906.
[207] GWP/B2003/005/007/23.

people should carry out fully the spirit of [their] compact...by becoming themselves bi-lingual."[208] In fact, Canada's amalgam of Norman, Celtic, and Teutonic elements, he later argued, meant that Anglo and French-Canadians were "identical in racial origins...The differences are those of education and tradition. There is no mysterious gulf of race to be bridged."[209] This imagined racial kinship, however, emphasised the Dominion's sectarian divide. Like Skelton, Wrong compared Canada to Ireland, whose Catholic clericalism and economic backwardness reminded him of Quebec. The antagonism between protestant Orangemen and Catholic nationalists in Ireland, he wrote, equally reflected "'two peoples,' as Lord Durham said of Canada, 'warring in the bosom of a single state,' cut off completely from each other."[210] The key difference, as G.M. Grant had argued years earlier, was that French-Canada's rural, Catholic *habitants* were "peaceful" and "contented" under the British flag, whereas sectarian hatred brewed in an Ireland denied Home Rule.[211]

Leading Canadian Round Tablers thus imagined that a 'civic' Greater Britain could include French-Canada. Edward Kylie, for example, promoted a *liberal* imperialism precisely because "the Imperialism of some ten or fifteen years ago was so contemptuous of the foreigner, so boastful of Anglo-Saxon institutions, that it alienated the races within the Empire who were not British in origin and thought. The French-Canadians in particular objected to being stampeded into an English Empire."[212] Imperial unity, Wrong agreed, was not premised on racial unity: "A racial nationalism involves either isolation, or the supremacy of a dominant race...we used to hear a good deal about the triumphant destiny of the Anglo-Saxon race...[but] to-day no wise statesman has any thought of trying to anglicize the British Empire."[213] Even John Willison, following his defection from Laurier, remained sympathetic towards Quebec and defended constitutional protections for the French

[208] George Wrong, "The Bi-lingual Question," in J.O. Miller (ed.), *The New Era in Canada: Essays Dealing with the Upbuilding of the Canadian Commonwealth* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1917), p. 259.
[209] George Wrong, "The Two Races in Canada," *RCHA* 4:1 (1925), p. 22.
[210] GWP/B2003/005/007/46-8.
[211] George Wrong, "St. Augustin," *UM* 12:1 (1913), pp. 67, 74.
[212] Kylie, "Liberalism and Empire," pp. 73-4.
[213] George Wrong, "The Growth of Nationalism in the British Empire," *AHR* 22:1 (1916), p. 51.

language.[214] "Twenty-five years ago," he wrote in 1912, "It was a common notion that the French people were unequal to the responsibilities of self-government...[now Quebec is] as well governed, as progressive, and as prosperous as any province in the Confederation."[215] Critically, he added, "Quebec and Ontario made the nation in mutual sacrifice and in mutual pledge of co-operation for the future."[216] It was essential, therefore, that imperialists "should always maintain a generous attitude towards Quebec."[217]

This idea of Britannic nationalism was on display at Quebec's Tercentenary celebrations in 1908. The "aim behind events at Quebec has been to sow the seeds of a larger Canadian nationality," a British periodical reported, and "to bring the whole of Canada...into touch with the life and ideals of the Empire."[218] Greater British iconography also featured French-Canada -for instance in the Royal Colonial Institute's *United Empire*, which profiled figures from Canadian and *Quebecois* history as "Master-Builders of Greater Britain."[219] This was politically significant as liberal imperialists hoped to overcome French-Canadian opposition to commit Canada to Imperial naval defence.[220] Indeed, between 1909-13 the naval question - with the brief but critical exception of the 1911 debate over freer North American trade - became the Dominion's preeminent political controversy. Here, however, we trespass upon a subject explored below. For the moment it is sufficient to note that Laurier's solution to the problem of naval defence was the establishment of an autonomous Canadian navy, which sought to bridge the racial divide between Anglo-Canadians, who favoured a contribution to Greater British defence, and French-Canadians who opposed any naval outlay whatever.

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[214] Clippingdale, *Willison*, pp. 291-2.
[215] Willison, *The New Canada*, p. 112.
[216] Ibid., p. 115.
[217] RTP/822/178, Willison to Grigg, 19 August 1913.
[218] James Milne, "The Quebec Tercentenary: The Call of the Present," *The Living Age* 258:3348 (5 September 1908), p. 602; H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
[219] See for example, J.D. Rogers, "Master-Builders of Greater Britain: Jacques Cartier," *UE* 3:8 (1912), pp. 633-6.
[220] RTP/777/20-21, 27-9, Wrong to Curtis, 10 March and 22 May 1912.

Laurier's policy, as we shall see, earned general approval in Ontario, though in Quebec the 1911 election turned decisively on French-Canadian opposition to 'Laurier's navy.'[221] There the Liberals lost 17 seats while Henri Bourassa's *Nationalistes* and Robert Borden's Conservatives gained ground.[222] But while Borden secured the Premiership due largely to Britannic sentiment in Ontario, the results in Quebec reflected deep hostility to imperial obligations. For the most part this did not entail hostility to the British Crown or the British 'connection.' But French-Canadian 'Britishness' was conditional upon maximum autonomy for Quebec within Confederation and for the Dominion within the Empire. As Bourassa concisely put it: "French-Canadians...do not desire to participate in Imperial Councils."[223] Thus the navy, as Willison later recalled, "was opposed by Mr. Bourassa as imperiling Canadian autonomy and exposing the Dominion to compulsory participation in the wars of the empire...Laurier committed Canada to naval defence, and in consequence sustained heavy political losses in Quebec."[224] The irony was that Laurier attempted to soothe the racial antagonism through compromise, and avowed that "the firm basis of the British Empire is...local autonomy[.]"[225] Robert Borden's Conservatives would prove even less successful in bridging the racial divide.

Conclusion

It is difficult to overstate the centrality of French-Canada to liberal debates over Dominion nation-building during the 'Laurier era.' The racial antagonism that dominated Canadian politics from the execution of Riel to the settlement of the Manitoba Schools Question challenged the viability of Confederation itself, while subsequent disputes over the nature of Canada's British connection further exacerbated the racial divide. In this context, Wilfrid Laurier fought a Sisyphean battle to maintain Dominion and Liberal party unity. This chapter, of course, only scratched the surface of those debates. Notable subjects, including the North-West Schools Question (1904-5) and the

[221] Dutil and Mackenzie, *Canada 1911*, ch. 9.
[222] Ibid., p. 258.
[223] HBP/M-721, Bourassa to Cahan (copy), 28 December 1911.
[224] Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 314-15; [Willison], "Canadian Affairs: I. Coronation and Conference," *RT* 1:4 (1911), p. 484. See also Henri Bourassa, *Why the Navy Act Should be Repealed* (Montréal: Le Devoir, 1912).
[225] Wilfrid Laurier, *Canada and the Navy* (Ottawa: Liberal party, 1912), pp. 3,14.

Conscription Crisis (1917), are treated elsewhere. Its central purpose, however, was to illuminate Ontario liberal answers to the 'French-Canadian Question': how to build a 'British-American' Dominion that accommodated and reflected the often opposed political demands of the 'two races.' As John Darwin rightly observes: "Much of the bitterness in Canadian politics...sprang from the fear that the pursuit of Britannic nationhood for Canada would be frustrated by French Canadian opposition."[226] For liberals, part of the answer involved expansive, civic conceptions of 'Britishness' to which French-Canadians might in principle subscribe. But this general belief in a liberal citizenship differed along Grit and Whig, and autonomist and imperialist lines. Moreover, tensions between civic and racial ideas of Britishness, on one hand, and majority rule and minority rights on the other, were always apparent. This conflict re-emerged, as we shall see, with destructive consequences during the Great War. Yet similar racial tensions were apparent in another aspect of Dominion nation-building to which we now turn: the 'explosive colonisation' of the Prairie West.

[226] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 153.

4

Greater Ontario

"One cannot know the significance of Canada...until he has crossed the wide plains of the West and has seen the pioneers...establishing the outposts of Empire and...British civilization."[1]
- John Willison, 1912[?]

At Confederation the vast Canadian North-West - encompassing modern Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Nunavut, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories - was regarded as the keystone of the nascent British-American nation. What G.M. Grant called the "great fertile belt" running west from the Red River, "through the valley of the Saskatchewan" and further to the "bases of the Rocky Mountains," was envisaged as the territory of a great settler empire.[2] In 1869 the new Government at Ottawa acquired title to the land from the Hudson's Bay Company and when the Pacific colony of British Columbia joined Confederation in 1871 the Dominion of Canada stretched "from Ocean to Ocean[.]"[3]

The settlement and development - or 'colonisation' - of the North-West was thus foundational to Dominion nation-building. For Anglo-Canadians this was conceived in terms of the expansion of British institutions and the Anglo-Saxon race - Britain's largest colony had itself acquired a colony.[4] Ontario liberals refined this idea, with George Brown's Toronto *Globe* regarding "the West as Ontario's proper sphere of influence."[5] Once connected by rail to the east, the *Globe* proclaimed, Ontarians would secure the North-West from American encroachment and establish under the British flag "a new Upper Canada...in its well-regulated society and government, in its

[1] WP/53/39811, Untitled speech [1912?].
[2] G.M. Grant, *Our North-West* (S.I., s.n., 1873[?]), p. 464.
[3] Grant, *Ocean to Ocean*, p. 1.
[4] Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 125-48; Doug Owram, "The Promise of the West as Settlement Frontier," in Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan (eds.), *The Prairie West as Promised Land* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), p. 4.
[5] Frank Underhill, "Political Ideas of the Upper Canadian Reformers, 1867-78," *RAMCHA* 21:1 (1942), p. 109.

education, morality, and religion."[6] Herein lay the ideological origins of what historian John Darwin has labelled a "Greater Ontario."[7]

It was not until the economic and demographic boom of the 'Laurier era,' however, that this vision began to be realised. The ingredients of 'explosive colonisation' - namely, mass immigration and an influx of British capital - combined with a Grit liberal ideology to reshape the Prairie West. Though historians have begun to engage with the wider global and imperial context of Western settlement, they have tended to focus on diasporic identities and regional politics.[8] This chapter, by contrast, explores how the West featured in Ontario liberal visions of Dominion nation-building, arguing that 'Greater Ontario' liberals conceived Western colonisation in terms of the construction of an Anglo-Ontarian settler society - a 'neo-Ontario' - that was central to the political future of the Dominion, the Empire, and Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal party. First, it highlights the centrality of Anglo settlers and Ontario's 'British' institutions to the colonisation of the North-West. Second, it examines how Anglo-Saxonist ideas of racial hierarchy shaped liberal views of European and Asian immigration to Western Canada. Finally, it assesses how liberal intellectuals grappled with the growing political significance of the Prairie West and the consequent re-alignment of Canadian politics in the early-twentieth-century.

Liberalism and Colonisation

I

Ontario liberal ideas of British America were intimately entwined with the colonisation of the West. "On this question of immigration turns, in my opinion, the whole future success of this great scheme," George Brown claimed during the Confederation debates, "And this question of

[6] Quoted in Underhill, "Upper Canadian Reformers, 1867-78," p. 109.
[7] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 153.
[8] See for example Marjory Harper, "Rhetoric and Reality: British Migration to Canada, 1867-1967," in *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 160-181; Kurt Korneski, *Race, Nation, and Reform Ideology in Winnipeg, 1880s-1920s* (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015); Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*; David E. Smith, "Instilling British Values in the Prairie Provinces," in Gregory Marchildon (ed.), *Immigration and Settlement, 1870-1939* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2009), pp. 441-56.

immigration naturally brings me to...the North-West territories."[9] Indeed, Brown hoped that Confederation and the acquisition of the North-West would "give a new start to immigration" from Great Britain, correcting the tendency of British settlers to favour "New South Wales or New Zealand."[10] There was some initial success in this regard. As Belich notes, a series of small 'booms' rippled through the North-West in the 1870s and '80s, notably in Manitoba where the population spiked "from 25,000 in 1871 to 62,000 in 1881 to 153,000 in 1891."[11] "The province," as historian Gerald Friesen wrote, "was now dominated by those of English origin (24 per cent), Scottish origin (24 per cent) and Irish origin (20 percent). Over 70 per cent had been born in Canada, and another 18 per cent in the British Isles."[12]

But while Anglo settlers flooded Manitoba the Indigenous and Métis population resisted - first by petition and then by force. The transfer of nominal control over 'Rupert's Land' from the Hudson's Bay Company to Ottawa prompted the 1870 Red River Rebellion, in which Manitoba's Métis took up arms against the Dominion. In response, John Macdonald raised a military force that - following the arduous journey to Manitoba - imposed Canadian and British sovereignty. By 1884-5 the influx of Anglo settlers, disappearance of the buffalo, and completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) sparked the North-West Rebellion and the final defeat of Louis Riel's forces in Saskatchewan.[13] By the 'Laurier era,' in Friesen's words: "[T]he Indians were on reserves, the Métis in disarray, the whites in control."[14]

In common with other nineteenth and twentieth-century British settler societies, and indeed imperial expansion across the globe, the dispossession of and violence against the Indigenous peoples of Western Canada was premised on pseudo-scientific racial theories and notions of

[9] George Brown, "Confederation Resolutions [8 February 1865]," in *Hon. George Brown*, p. 327.
[10] Ibid., pp. 326, 329.
[11] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 406-7.
[12] Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, p. 202.
[13] Sarah Carter, "Aboriginal People of Canada and the British Empire," in *Canada and the British Empire*, pp. 212-18
[14] Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, p. 92.

'progress.'[15] At best, Indigenous populations were romanticised as doomed or 'unprogressive' races; at worst, they faced a campaign of state-sponsored cultural extirpation under Canada's Indian Act (1876).[16] As G.M. Grant noted when he surveyed the Red River: "The land along it...extended two miles into the prairie is taken up by the French half-breeds; all beyond is waiting for settlers...[and] a treaty has been made with the Indians that extinguishes their claims to the land[.]"[17] The Métis, Goldwin Smith agreed, could not hope to occupy the North-West

> to the exclusion of British and Protestant colonisation...The rising of the Half-breeds was quelled...after a resistance which the candour of history must allow to have done credit to the valour of those poor people...[but] [t]he Half-breeds are not a strong race, nor is immigration doing much to recruit their numbers. The next generation will probably see their few thousands merged in a great inflow of English-speaking settlers.[18]

Yet the rate of Western colonisation disappointed. The Liberals indicted Macdonald's settlement policies and Laurier impugned his "oppression" of the Métis.[19] This reflected sympathy for the French-speaking, Roman Catholic population and the need to respond to *Quebecois* outrage. But Laurier also despised the bargain that granted the Canadian Pacific Syndicate control over vast tracts of Western land. It was clear, he argued, that the "monstrous monopoly...will make the company landlords of the North-West...retard settlement and press heavily upon the energies of the settlers."[20] The 1893 Liberal platform thus called for "Land for the Settler - Not for the Speculator."[21] The CPR, then, was a "necessary though not sufficient condition" for 'explosive colonisation,' and the settlement of the Canadian Prairie lagged behind that of the American and Australian 'Wests.'[22] The small Canadian 'booms' turned to 'busts' and, as John Willison wrote, "The sanguine expectations of

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[15] Zoe Laidlaw and Alan Lester (eds.), *Indigenous Communities and Settler Colonialism: Land Holding, Loss and Survival in an Interconnected World* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). See also James Belich, *The Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict: The Maori, the British, and the New Zealand Wars* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989 [1986]), pp. 321-23; David Hall, Clifford Sifton and Canadian Indian Administration, 1896-1905," in *Immigration and Settlement*, pp. 183-211.
[16] See for example Keith Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance: Indigenous Communities in Western Canada, 1877-1927* (Edmonton: Athabasca University, 2009).
[17] Grant, *Ocean to Ocean*, p. 62.
[18] Smith, *Canadian Question*, pp. 197-9.
[19] Wilfrid Laurier, "The Second Insurrection in the North-West," in *Laurier on the Platform*, pp. 214.
[20] Wilfrid Laurier, "The Construction of the Pacific," in Ibid., pp. 130-31, 134.
[21] *Platform of the Liberal Party of Canada* (Charlottetown: Geo. W. Gardiner, 1895), p. 6.
[22] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 408-9; John Eagle, *The Canadian Pacific Railway and the Development of Western Canada, 1896-1914* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), p. 213.

rapid settlement...fell lamentably short of realization."[23] "Does it not seem strange," Adam Shortt noted following his tour of the North-West in 1895, "that in spite of the abnormal efforts put forth by the Government...these regions should yet fill up so slowly?"[24] Goldwin Smith was more scathing: "England has been led to believe that the Canadian North-West will soon be the seat of a great British population...There is at present little apparent ground for this belief."[25]

Notwithstanding this apparent failure Anglo settlers in the West decisively outnumbered the predominantly French-speaking Métis. The result, as we saw above, was a sustained campaign to abolish separate Catholic schools in Manitoba and official bilingualism across the North-West territories. While Laurier sympathised with the French-Catholic minority political pressure in Ontario and the 'facts on the ground' in Manitoba dictated, as Willison put it: "that the Western provinces would be English. It was important, if not essential, that these new communities should determine the character of their own local institutions."[26] These would be based on "the Grit democracy of rural Ontario."[27] Indeed, most liberals opposed the importation of Old Ontario's racial and religious compromises with Francophones, Catholics, and Quebec. They intended that the West, as historian David Hall writes, would be "dominated by settlers from Ontario, with a government-run school system like that of Ontario, no bilingualism...freedom for the majority to control the government...[and] imbued with provincial rights sentiment."[28] Laurier's settlement of the Manitoba Schools Question along these lines helped to solidify his victory in 1896, when John Willison reported in the *Globe* that "in future years the west may never be troubled by the sectarian quarrels that have harassed the east."[29] Instead, liberals envisioned a neo-Ontarian outpost of British

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[23] Willison, *Laurier*, I, p. 404. .
[24] Adam Shortt, "Some Observations on the Great North-West," *QQ* 2:3 (1895), pp. 184-5.
[25] Goldwin Smith, "The Colonial Conference," *CR* 67 (1895), p. 111.
[26] Willison, *Laurier*, II, p. 52.
[27] W.L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 233.
[28] David Hall, "Clifford Sifton's Vision of the Prairie West," in *The Prairie West*, p. 79. See also Paul Crunican, *Priests and Politicians: Manitoba schools and the election of 1896* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 3-11.
[29] *TG*, 21 November 1896.

civilisation and the Anglo-Saxon race, built on the institutional and ideological inheritance of Grit liberalism.

II

The unsatisfactory state of Western colonisation, however, remained acute. As John Dafoe recalled, "policies, intended to further development in the west...[and] efforts to induce immigration...had been, on the whole, ill-considered and badly applied...in the west there was stagnation, breeding despair."[30] But Laurier's intent to jump-start settlement was apparent when he appointed Clifford Sifton as Minister of the Interior in 1896. The appointment of Sifton - who pledged to boost colonisation "in a vigorous and intelligent way"[31] - was widely lauded, not least by John Willison.[32] As his biographer notes, Western settlement became central to Willison's vision of Dominion nation-building following a trip through the North-West in 1895. "The Canadian who has not seen western Canada," he claimed in the *Globe*, "has not reached his full stature and can have but a poor appreciation of the magnificent estate of his countrymen."[33]

Finally, from 1896-7 through 1913 the Canadian West boomed, due in part to Sifton's desperate "boosterism."[34] British capital - channelled through Montreal and, increasingly, Toronto - flooded into the North-West along with Anglo settlers from Ontario, Britain, and the United States, though it was the rural Ontario immigrant, George Wrong observed, "who dominates the West and is more in evidence than any other type."[35] At the height of the boom in 1912-13, 150,000 Britons arrived in Canada, most destined for the West.[36] At the same time, "no fewer than 600,000

[30] Dafoe, *Sifton*, pp. 103-4.
[31] Quoted in Dafoe, *Sifton*, p. 104.
[32] CSP/C-454/6054, Willison to Sifton, 17 November 1896.
[33] Quoted in Clippingdale, *Willison*, pp. 122-3. See also WP/53/39810, Untitled speech [1912?].
[34] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 409.
[35] GWP/B2003/005/007/45, diary, 5 June 1912.
[36] Brown and Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921*, p. 57.

Americans...flowed into Canada between 1897 and 1913."[37] Many of the latter were returning Canadians with experience of prairie farming.[38]

Population growth in the Prairie provinces, 1881-1921[39]

	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Alberta	-*	-*	73,000	374,000	588,000
Manitoba	62,000	153,000	255,000	461,000	610,000
Northwest Territories	56,000	99,000	20,000	7,000	8,000
Saskatchewan	-*	-*	91,000	492,000	758,000
Total	118,000	252,000	439,000	1,334,000	1,964,000

* included in Northwest Territories

But the sudden influx of non-Canadian settlers caused trepidation among Ontario liberals. Unlike the United States, Willison explained, Canada had no "continuous settlement":

> One hundred miles north of Toronto we leave a settled country...We take train at Toronto in the social, commercial, and political atmosphere of Older Canada. Disembarking at Winnipeg we feel a new atmosphere...Westward from Winnipeg we plunge into the newer settlements...They know nothing of the older provinces[.][40]

That the majority of immigrants were Anglos, therefore, was insufficient. The North-West's isolation from Ontario and its lack of established civic institutions made it essential to cultivate Dominion sentiment. The territories of Alberta and Saskatchewan in particular, Sifton feared, were "settled largely by people who have no education in what may be called the Canadian National view."[41] This was especially, though not exclusively, true of Americans who had no prior affection for British institutions or the British 'connection.' Nonetheless, Ontario liberals favoured American immigration. "Possibly the West is more partial to Americans than to settlers of any other nationality," Willison

[37] Belich, *Replenishing*, p. 409-10.
[38] Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, p. 60; Freda Hawkins, *Critical Years in Immigration: Canada and Australia Compared* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), p. 4.
[39] Brian Mitchell (ed.), "A3 North America: Population of Major Administrative Divisions," in *International Historical Statistics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 1. Accessed 26 January 2015, at http://www.palgraveconnect.com/pc/doifinder/10.1057/9781137305688.0336. [online].
[40] Willison, *The New Canada*, pp. 26-8.
[41] JDP/M-73, Sifton to Dafoe, 26 September 1911.

claimed.[42] "Reared under free institutions, thrifty, capable, progressive, home-loving and law abiding, [Americans] constitute one of the very best elements of our population[.]"[43] The "thousands of Americans that are entering our north west," John Ewart agreed, would easily become Canadians "if we can surround them with a Canadian sentiment."[44] Even Goldwin Smith maintained that "American farmers...will be good Canadian citizens and loyal subjects of the British Crown."[45]

Difficulties pertaining to Anglo immigration, then, were not racial, but related to the settlers' political and ideological inclinations. Americans, for instance, largely supported freer trade and therefore the Liberal party.[46] British settlers were more diverse, though Laurier feared that many became Tories upon arrival in Canada.[47] John Dafoe reassured him that this was not necessarily true. "So far as my observation has gone," he reported:

> the Scotch and Welsh immigrants are predominantly Liberal, and remain so in Canada. The north of Ireland immigrants, who come to Canada in great numbers, are almost without exception Tories, being in most cases affiliated with the Orange order. As for English immigration, I am inclined to believe that a majority of the immigrants are Conservative in British politics.[48]

Many English and Scottish settlers, however, were "convinced free traders," and their political affiliation depended on whether they settled on farms or in cities.[49] "In any case," Dafoe concluded, "the British born are not numerous enough to control the destinies of Canada...[and] Canadians...are bound to resent an organized attempt by new-comers to run their country for them."[50]

There was, in fact, some resentment towards the English - both against 'low quality' labourers and the occasionally haughty attitude of those who, Sifton wrote, thought they were "paying the country a compliment to come[.]"[51] As George Wrong reported from Saskatoon: "I was told that the two things an Englishman does are to build a house and to plant a garden...the

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[42] [John Willison], "Canada: East and West," *RT* 9:33 (1918), pp. 167.
[43] WP/51/2/37637-8, Untitled speech [1909-10?]
[44] AMP/35/197, Ewart to Milner, 11 May 1909.
[45] Smith, "Canada, England and the States," p. 203.
[46] CSP/193/154612/69, Dafoe to Sifton, 16 August 1910.
[47] JDP/M-73, Laurier to Dafoe, 6 November 1912.
[48] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Laurier (copy), 18 November 1912.
[49] CSP/193/154612/69, Dafoe to Sifton, 16 August 1910; WP/4/32/2360, Borden to Willison, 22 May 1913.
[50] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Laurier (copy), 18 November 1912.
[51] LP/C-766/34008, Sifton to Laurier, 30 May 1899. See also Brown and Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921*, pp. 57-8.

Englishman is a year later than the clever American in getting his reward from the soil."[52] Nevertheless, 'Greater Ontario' liberals lauded British immigration. Willison, for example, became an advocate of state-directed colonisation to ensure the preferential selection of British settlers.[53] Others, including Sifton, preferred a more *laissez-faire* approach.[54] The "better class of British settlers," Adam Shortt maintained, were "shrewd, intelligent, self-reliant immigrants who came...on their own account...[and] form the intellectual and social backbone of the [Western] country."[55]

III

By the 1900s Wilfrid Laurier presided over the 'explosive colonisation' of the West. "[T]he prairies of the North-West," he told Parliament, "are now invaded from all sides by the white race."[56] And whether Anglo settlers arrived from Britain or the United States, liberals agreed that they easily assimilated. The chief institutions in this regard were public schools. Not only did they enforce 'Anglo-conformity' among non-Anglos, but they turned British and American settlers - or at least their children - into British-Americans.[57] But the North-West's suddenly-booming population led Laurier to promise full provincial status for Alberta and Saskatchewan at the 1904 election, thus reviving the issue of separate Catholic schools, which were provided under the terms of the 1875 North-West Territories Act.[58] The French-Canadian Catholic Hierarchy, of course, never accepted Manitoba's Laurier-Greenway Compromise while Henri Bourassa pressured Laurier to defend the West's dwindling French-Catholic minority.[59] Laurier, in turn, maintained that the British North

[52] GWP/B2003/005/007/45, diary, 5 June 1912.
[53] WP/4/32/2392-4, Willison to Borden (copy), 23 February 1915; John Willison, "Immigration and Settlement," in *The New Era in Canada*, pp. 106-09. See also Janice Cavell, "The Imperial Race and the immigration Sieve: The Canadian Debate on Assisted British Migration and Empire Settlement, 1900-30," *JICH* 34:3 (2006), pp. 345-67.
[54] CSP/209/163251/19, Sifton to Dafoe (copy), 3 March 1922; Clifford Sifton, "The Making of Canada," in C.S. Goldman (ed.), *The Empire and the Century* (London: Routledge, 1998 [1905]), p. 359.
[55] Shortt, "Some Observations on the Great North-West," p. 16.
[56] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 30 July 1903.
[57] Smith, "Instilling British Values in the Prairie Provinces," p. 447.
[58] Creighton, *Canada's First Century*, p. 27.
[59] LP/C-810/84101-6, 'Memoir pour servir au réglement de la question scholaire au Manitoba et dans les Terriroire du Nord Ouest,' enclosed in Bourassa to Laurier, 1 April 1904; HBP/M-722, Bourassa to Laurier (copy), 1 April 1904; Schull, *Laurier*, pp. 444-9.

America Act (1867) guaranteed the West's existing school system and assured Bourassa that he would apply its provisions.[60]

This ensured a confrontation with 'Greater Ontario' liberals and John Willison was central to the dispute. By 1903 when he left the *Globe* for the independent Toronto *News* he had already begun to diverge from Laurier. Though he claimed that, "When I left the *Globe*...I had no thought of a political separation," he "knew that [Laurier] desired to guarantee separate schools...when the Western Territories were divided into provinces[.]"[61] Almost immediately the *News* declared its opposition,[62] and Laurier responded with a plea for compromise:

> Why, in the name of patriotism, attempt to resurrect the now dormant separate school question? [...] It will come in a very different form from what it was in 1896, but with the same bitter passions on both sides...I would only ask you to remember that Confederation was a compromise, and that for the great object of bringing together the disjointed provinces, George Brown made great sacrifices of private opinion...the work of effecting the union is far from complete...[and] must be continued in the same spirit in which it was conceived[.][63]

Willison, however, was uncompromising: "I feel strongly, as you know I have felt for years, that the West should control its own educational affairs...That was my position upon the Manitoba question and I do not see how it is possible to take any other position with respect to the territories."[64]

Despite Anglo-Canadian opposition, Laurier - seemingly confident in his hold upon power - attempted to entrench Catholic schools in the new provinces in apparent apostasy from the Grit liberal tradition. Clifford Sifton promptly resigned from the Government and John Dafoe, who "did not dream that Sir Wilfrid would introduce this measure until [Sifton] had agreed to its provisions," scrambled to realign the editorial position of the Manitoba *Free Press*.[65] Willison, meanwhile, stridently denounced the measure.[66] "It is my clear conviction," he wrote to Laurier

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[60] HBP/M-722, Laurier to Bourassa, 5 April 1904.
[61] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 266.
[62] Clippingdale, *Willison*, p. 211.
[63] WP/24/179/18045-7, Laurier to Willison, 7 June 1904; LP/C-812/86510-11, Laurier to Willison (copy), 7 June 1904.
[64] LP/C-812/86548-50, Willison to Laurier, 9 June 1904.
[65] CSP/263/143653/3, Sifton to Dafoe (copy), 25 February 1905; *MFP*, 24 February, 22 March 1905.
[66] Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 266-73.

> that outside of Ontario and Quebec the plain intention was that the Provinces should have exclusive control over education...I have always tried to allow for the natural race feeling of Quebec...but from Confederation down the plain meaning of the constitution has been deliberately perverted to serve the ends of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy...[and] the Hierarchy have never touched education except to check, embarrass, and prevent the free play of human intelligence. With these views I am bound to oppose, and to oppose with all the power I possess, the North West bills.[67]

This stand reflected the centre ground of Ontario liberal opinion.[68] "May I congratulate you on your splendid fight for Provincial Rights," W.L. Grant, for example, wrote to Willison. "I am very much disappointed to see Sir Wilfrid Laurier proving false to his own best self."[69] Laurier, for his part, recognised that "the Autonomy Bills...imposed upon my friends from Ontario...an unwelcome sacrifice."[70] Nonetheless, following a negotiated compromise with Sifton - which incidentally failed to mollify Bourassa - most 'Greater Ontario' liberals remained loyal to the government.[71] The agreement, John Dafoe argued, fell "far short of the establishment of separate schools as we knew them in Manitoba...Liberals both in and out of Parliament, with but few exceptions, will accept the...wise and statesmanlike solution.[72] But Dafoe, too, was disillusioned. "The less I admire Sir Wilfrid," he wrote to Sifton, "the more he interests me. He is a Latin mind of extreme subtlety; and the Anglo-Saxon is simply confused in attempting to follow its workings...[but] that Sir Wilfrid, with all his sagacity, has never really understood the English Canadians, was shown in...the autonomy bills."[73] "The result of Laurier's action," Willison forecast, "will be to weaken the Government, and himself particularly, in the English provinces."[74]

Significantly, however, both Laurier and Willison invoked the legacy of George Brown to justify their positions. "[Y]ou say that my present course is contrary to all the traditions of the Liberal party in the matter of provincial rights," Laurier wrote to Willison, but "[i]s not my course exactly on

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[67] LP/C-1165/209162-6, Willison to Laurier, 9 March 1905; WP/24/179/18087-8, Willison to Laurier (copy), 9 March 1905.
[68] Clippingdale, *Willison*, pp. 215-7.
[69] See for example WP/17/131/12333, W.L. Grant to Willison, 4 May 1905.
[70] LP/C-882/162099, Laurier to Gregory (copy), 23 November 1909.
[71] CSP/177/143653/16-18, Dafoe to Sifton, 30 March 1905; Dafoe, *Sifton*, pp. 282, 291-302.
[72] *MFP*, 22 March 1905.
[73] CSP/183/147479/63, Dafoe to Sifton, 7 July 1908.
[74] WLGP/10, Willison to W.L. Grant, 18 May 1905.

the lines laid down by Brown[...]?"[75] Willison, conversely, lamented Laurier's alienation of Ontario "Liberals who have been educated for a generation in the doctrines of provincial rights and who came into office...upon a platform the very reverse of that which they now occupy."[76] The new Conservative leader Robert Borden insightfully assessed the situation:

> I realise more and more that thoughtful and earnest Liberals...especially in Ontario are deeply disappointed at the action of Sir Wilfrid Laurier...[he] is the idol of his fellow countrymen in...Quebec and he has been almost equally revered by the Liberals of...Ontario. Probably he had a strength in that Province which the Conservatives have never fully realised...The Liberals looked up to him...to oppose the efforts of his own church when these seemed to infringe upon the constitution...Now...[t]heir confidence in him has vanished[.][77]

While Willison claimed that he had never "wandered far from the old faith,"[78] he concluded that Laurier deserted Ontarians "of the school of George Brown, opposed to ecclesiastical control in education and devoted to provincial rights as a fundamental principle of the Liberal party."[79]

In either case, Borden and Willison were right that the settlement of the Manitoba Schools Question had cemented Laurier's Liberal consensus whereas the North-West Schools Question undermined the trust of his Anglo-Canadian allies. Indeed, the fact that Laurier loyalist Oscar Skelton later lauded Western schools for "following good Ontario and democratic practice" illustrated the significance of public schools and local autonomy to liberal visions of Ontario's empire.[80] But the 'provincial rights' argument was also a thinly-disguised defence of Anglo majority rule, and the settlement of the West was underpinned by 'Old' Ontario's peculiar liberal amalgam of Anglo-Saxonism, 'Britishness,' and Dominion nation-building. It was only with the advent of extensive non-Anglo immigration that the idea of a 'neo-Ontarian' Prairie West, and its great destiny within Confederation and the British Empire, began to be seriously questioned.

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[75] WP/24/179/18081, Laurier to Willison, 7 March 1905.
[76] WP/4/32/2259, Willison to Borden (copy), 22 April 1905.
[77] WP/4/32/2263, Borden to Willison, 26 April 1905; RBP/C-4428/149053, Borden to Willison (copy), 26 April 1905.
[78] LP/C-808/81694, Willison to Laurier, 28 January 1904.
[79] John Willison, *Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, II (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 378.
[80] Skelton, *The Language Issue in Canada*, pp. 19-20.

Anglo-Saxonism and Racial Hierarchy

I

There was no dispute amongst Anglophone liberals over the desirability of Anglo-Saxon colonists. More controversially, however, Clifford Sifton recruited northern and eastern Europeans to supplement Ontarian, British, and American settlement. At the same time, a *de facto* 'White Canada' policy severely restricted Asian immigration. This approach to non-Anglo settlement reflected the influence of Anglo-Saxonism on conceptions of 'Britishness' largely, but not entirely, bounded by 'whiteness.' Thus northern European settlers - especially Germans and Scandinavians - were favoured because of their supposed racial kinship with Anglo-Saxons.[81] Liberals were familiar with German settlements in southwestern Ontario and believed that 'Germanic' races easily assimilated into British-American society. They were less certain about eastern Europeans and openly hostile to Asians. These attitudes revealed a racial hierarchy that ranked non-Anglo immigrants: Germans and Scandinavians were preferred, eastern Europeans were tolerated, and Asians faced exclusion. Liberal views of immigration, in short, depended on whether they believed that particular races could become, as Sifton put it, "self-supporting and self-respecting citizen[s] of a free British country."[82]

As largely protestant members of a purportedly wider 'Teutonic' race, Germans and Scandinavians easily supplemented Anglo settlers. Between 1896 and 1914, 600,000 continental Europeans arrived in Canada, of which 403,000 were German and 113,000 were Scandinavian.[83] As John Willison noted in 1900, "we have room here for millions of the northern [European] races...and we should nurture them...into a stalwart Canadianism."[84] In this respect Willison lauded the example of the United States, which received European immigrants "into the great American household...and [made] them as aggressively American as the native-born descendants of the men of...Massachusetts Bay."[85] George Parkin similarly endorsed the addition of "energetic and useful

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[81] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 62-5.
[82] Sifton, "The Making of Canada," p. 360.
[83] Hawkins, *Critical Years in Immigration*, pp. 4, 309 n3.
[84] Willison, *The American Spirit*, pp. 5-6.
[85] Ibid., p. 5.

material from other races," especially Scandinavians and "the plodding German,"[86] who "we are assimilating to Canadian ideals in that vast Western country."[87] Despite concerns over their loyalty during the Great War, 'Germanic' Europeans were seen as model settlers and Liberals particularly cultivated their support.[88] "German people," Laurier commented, "are certainly excellent citizens[.]"[89]

Liberals further believed that northern Europeans - unlike their southern 'Latin' counterparts - could withstand the harsh Canadian climate. Adam Shortt, for instance, was relieved that "by the vigour of the North-West winter [Canada] is preserved from the overflow of Southern Europe."[90] But eastern Europeans, too, were seen as hardy settlers and Clifford Sifton's desperation for colonists led to the recruitment of immigrants from impoverished, non-protestant communities of the Hapsburg and Romanov empires. Yet while Sifton claimed that he was not "disposed to exclude foreigners of any nationality who seemed likely to become successful agriculturalists," even this implicitly discriminatory policy provoked "a very marked difference of opinion as to the wisdom of the course we have adopted."[91] Most controversial were the Doukhobors - a persecuted sect of non-Orthodox Russian Christians - who Sifton maintained would be "amongst the best settlers we will have in the North-West."[92] But discontent over the 'quality' of settlers, particularly the Doukhobors, remained.[93] One urban Englishman, George Parkin declared, was worth "infinitely more for Western Canada than all the Dukhobors [sic] put together."[94] G.M. Grant, though, was more circumspect, arguing in 1902: "We have as many people of strange languages as we can digest. Our best settlers are our own children, and those who come to us from the south of their own accord. We should,

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[86] Parkin, *The Great Dominion*, pp. 9-10, 35.
[87] LP/C-894/174719, Parkin to Laurier, 13 September 1910.
[88] See for example, CSP/140/111898/38-43, Dafoe to Sifton, 3 November 1903, 157/127183/13-14, 37-41, Dafoe to Sifton, 22 January 1904; LP/C-804/77874, Dafoe to Laurier, 16 October 1903.
[89] JDP/M-73, Laurier to Dafoe, 8 December 1914.
[90] Shortt, "Some Observations on the Great North-West," p. 16.
[91] LP/C-781/51602, Sifton to Laurier, 15 April 1901; Dafoe, *Sifton*, pp. 143-4.
[92] WP/37/286/27419, Sifton to Willison, 17 October 1899.
[93] CSP/C-497, Willison to Sifton, 15 October 1899; CSP/97/76245/40, Dafoe to Sifton, 7 November 1901.
[94] Arthur Hawkes, "The Imperial Emigrant," *UE* 3 (1912), p. 216.

however, always welcome those who have suffered for conscience sake. They are sure to be a good stock."[95]

With the onset of the Western boom, however, there were growing concerns over the extent of eastern European immigration. Goldwin Smith, for example, lamented that "the North-West has been filling with the most miscellaneous elements[.]" Not every settler, he warned in a racialist critique, would be "a good citizen or good material for a free commonwealth."[96] John Willison echoed Smith's warning. "[T]here are many who feel that, unless there is careful selection of immigrants more 'foreigners' will be admitted than can be assimilated." It was critical, he argued, that "all who enter into the privileges of Canadian citizenship...must submit to all the conditions which govern English-speaking British subjects."[97] These apprehensions were even shared by French-Canadian *Nationalistes* who worried that mass immigration was diluting Canada's French character. The *Quebecois* migrated to New England in far larger numbers than to the North-West or northern Quebec, and neither the Dominion government nor the Catholic Hierarchy actively pursued Francophone immigration.[98] Henri Bourassa thus warned that Canada was

> not only a bi-racial country, but it is threatening to become a multi-racial country...it is not good for the unity of Canada and is not conducive to the maintenance of British institutions that we should be so anxious just for the purpose of selling our lands...to endanger the national spirit and mental unity of the country.[99]

By the 1900s and 1910s this anxiety was widespread, and concerns over public schooling in the North-West arose in this context.[100] Indeed, liberals worried that separate Catholic schools would perpetuate ghettoised European communities. "In the West," O.D. Skelton wrote, immigrants from "Austria-Hungary far outnumber the [native] Indians. Our task of assimilation is greater than any other country has ever faced...In this process of assimilation, or rather of unifying, the school

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[95] Grant, "Thanksgiving and Retrospect," p. 227.
[96] Smith, "Canada, England and the States," p. 203.
[97] [Willison], "Canada: East and West," pp. 166-7.
[98] Serge Courville, "Part of the British Empire, Too: French Canada and Colonization Propaganda," in Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (eds.), *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), pp. 129-141; Kennedy, *Liberal Nationalisms*, pp. 172-4; Morris Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North, 1870-1914* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971), pp. 165-79.
[99] AMP/35/106, Bourassa speech, "The Creation of a National Spirit," quoted in Grey to Milner, 3 January 1909.
[100] Jatinder Mann, "'Anglo-Conformity': Assimilation Policy in Canada, 1890s-1950s," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 50 (2014), pp. 265-6.

stands out as the chief agent.[101] With some exception for French-Canadians, therefore, liberals maintained, as Skelton put it, that "without the widest possible knowledge of English no common Canadian consciousness is conceivable."[102] Concerns over the integration of Galicians and Ruthenians in particular caused George Wrong, during a trip to the Pacific coast, "to gather...a certain doubt as to whether Saskatchewan is to be an English-speaking province...Everywhere [in the West] it is a question of race and language."[103] At Winnipeg, John Dafoe admitted to Wrong that "Canada...has made some terrible mistakes in regard to the west...[and] pour[ing] immigrants into the country from central Europe."[104] It was essential, Dafoe concluded, that aside from some "preferential treatment to the French...bilingualism...[should] be wiped out[.]"[105] Otherwise, Manitoba risked being "transformed into middle Europe on a small scale, filled with warring races."[106] As John Ewart bluntly stated: "We are receiving as many people each year as we can readily assimilate."[107]

II

Yet despite these concerns liberals believed that - with adequate resources and controls - white eastern Europeans were in fact assimilable. Asian immigrants, conversely, were regarded as an inherently insidious danger. Indeed, Asian immigration evoked a disproportionate reaction to the number of Asians who actually arrived in Canada. This was manifested primarily in British Columbia through racist anti-Japanese riots, a tax levied on Chinese migrants, and the Komagata Maru 'incident' in which a ship of British Indian Sikhs was refused permission to land at Vancouver in 1914. But Asian immigration was largely confined to the Pacific coast and Canadian agitation for racial

[101] ODSP/9, Articles & Drafts (2 of 2), n.d., "Canadianizing the Foreign Element [1917-8?]."
[102] Skelton, *The Language Issue in Canada*, pp. 23-4.
[103] AMP/371/356-7, "Extracts." See also Skelton, *The Language Issue in Canada*, pp. 18-22.
[104] GWP/B2003/005/008/55, diary, 24 June 1916.
[105] CSP/202/160119/30, Dafoe to Sifton, 17 August 1915
[106] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Cote (copy), 6 April 1916.
[107] JEP/1/79, Ewart to Duveen (copy), 26 July 1910.

exclusion emanated predominantly from British Columbia's labour unions.[108] Why, then, were Ontario liberals concerned about Asian immigration?

Population of British Columbia by Racial Origin, 1901-1921[109]

Year	Total population	Chinese	Japanese	'East Indian' / other Asians	% Asian
1901	178,657	14,885	4,597	84	10.9
1911	392,480	19,568	8,587	2,292	7.8
1921	524,582	23,533	15,006	989	7.5

Prior to the construction of the CPR British Columbia's Anglo settlers arrived primarily via the Pacific Ocean. 'Overlanders' from Upper Canada were rare, and in some respects British Columbia shared more in common with New Zealand than with Ontario.[110] Nor was it fully included in the visions of a 'Greater Ontario' that extended to the Rocky Mountains. However, the 'All Red Route' and the ideology of Dominion nation-building 'annihilated' the physical and mental distance that separated Ontario from the Pacific coast.[111] With the Pacific Province and its new metropolis, Vancouver, re-imagined as a gateway to the North-West most Ontario liberals endorsed British Columbian demands for a 'White Canada.' Two assumptions guided their reasoning. First was the racist belief that Asians were inassimilable by definition into a British-American citizenship largely circumscribed by 'whiteness.' Second was the fear that failing to accommodate British Columbian demands could fracture Confederation. 'White Canada,' then, served both exclusive and - in a

[108] See especially Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-1941* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003); W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Towards Orientals in British Columbia, 3rd edition* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002 [1978]).
[109] Adapted from Ward, *White Canada Forever*, p. 171.
[110] J.F. Bosher, "Vancouver Island in the Empire," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 33:3 (2005), pp. 349-50.
[111] On this phenomenon, see Duncan Bell, "Dissolving Distance: Technology, Space, and Empire in British Political Thought, 1770-1900," *Journal of Modern History* 77:3 (2005), pp. 523-62.

limited sense - inclusive purposes by excluding non-white Asian and Indian migrants while connecting Ontarians to racialised Anglo-Canadian and Anglo-Pacific communities.[112]

There were, to be sure, occasional and equivocal dissenting voices. One such voice was provided by G.M. Grant, who condemned discrimination against Chinese labourers. "China places no such restrictions on Canadians," he wrote, and discriminatory legislation that contravened "the principles of justice and the rights of humanity" was "un-British...anti-British...[and] contrary to the spirit of Christianity."[113] Canadian morality was debased, Grant argued, "when it refuses to recognise that God has made of one blood all nations to dwell on the face of the earth and when it draws distinctions based upon race, colour, creed, or sex."[114] Though Grant never doubted the providence of Anglo-Saxons or Canada's right to control immigration, he objected to "offensive...restrictions" that singled out China for peculiar treatment.[115] After Grant's death in 1902, however, the issue of Asian immigration became acute. For liberal imperialists like George Wrong and John Willison it was important to both appease British Columbia and ensure a uniform racial standard across the Dominion. British Columbia, Wrong observed, was "a world by itself...[with] interests and problems which the rest of Canada hardly understands. For instance here the question of Oriental labour is acute."[116] Asian races, he argued, were inassimilable and their arrival in Canada would lead to the moral degeneration of Anglo-Saxons:

> The oriental will be the hewer of wood and drawer of water for the occidental. The labour which the oriental does will be despised by the western races...Through not doing it they will lack the discipline of the hard workers and will probably become lazy and inefficient. [Lionel] Curtis has seen this result in South Africa and he takes the sternest view as to excluding all orientals...[and] I think I agree with him.[117]

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[112] Mann, "'Anglo-Conformity,' p. 255-6; Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, pp. 178-89.
[113] GMGP/11/'Resume of the Action Taken by our Government with Reference to Chinese Immigration.'
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] AMP/371/363, "Extracts."; Willison, *The New Canada*, pp. 36, 108.
[117] AMP/371/363-4, "Extracts."

Willison similarly acknowledged British Columbia's "curious social and political detachment" from the rest of Canada, and Asian immigration seemed likely to exacerbate the divergence.[118] "For my own part," he explained

> I would maintain 'a white Canada' even if in order to accomplish this end it were necessary to enact measures of exclusion. I do not know whether or not this is the general feeling of Eastern Canada where the question is not acute...But the supreme question for Canadian patriots is to maintain British standards of civilization...and as [this is] incompatible with any serious admixture of Asiatic elements in our population there should be rigid regulation of such immigration and absolute exclusion if ever white supremacy in any Province of the Confederation should be threatened.[119]

This "fundamental racial exclusionism" linked the Anglo settler societies of the Pacific and impinged on British imperial politics.[120] The Pacific Dominions embarrassed the British government, which feared an alliance of the Dominions with the United States to defend their 'Great White Walls.'[121] 'Constructive imperialists' thus sought to institutionalise the racial foundations of the empire and reconcile exclusionism, particularly of Indians, with imperial unity.[122] In Canada, British Columbia - in common feeling with California, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska - pressured Ottawa to restrict Asian immigration.[123] Though Wilfrid Laurier submitted to Cascadian pressure - raising the Chinese 'head tax,' negotiating the so-called 'Gentleman's Agreement' to limit immigration from Japan, and instituting the 'continuous passage' rule that applied primarily to Indian migrants - he opposed imperial coordination and resisted more vigorous measures of exclusion.[124]

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[118] Willison, *The New Canada,* p. 30.
[119] WP/53/39821-2, Untitled speech [1912?]."
[120] Belich, *Replenishing*, p. 466. See also James Belich, "Race," in David Armitage and Allison Bashford (eds.), *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 269-78; Cees Heere, "'That racial chasm that yawms eternally in our midst': The British empire and the politics of Asian migration, 1900-14," *Historical Research* (2016), online: doi:10.1111/1468-2281.12158. Accessed 15 October 2016; Paul Kramer, "Empire against Exclusion in Early 20th Century Trans-Pacific History," *Nanzan Review of American Studies* 33 (2011), pp. 13-32.
[121] British rule in India, the Anglo-Japanese alliance, and Open Door trade in China all seemed threatened by the Dominions' racial exclusionism.
[122] Heere, "The British empire and the politics of Asian migration," pp. 10-11. See for example Alfred Milner, "The Two Empires," in *The Nation and the Empire: Being a Collection of Speeches and Addresses, with an introduction by Lord Milner, G.C.B.* (London: Constable & Co., 1913), pp. 289-300.
[123] JBP/USA/27/255-8, 'Secret Memorandum,' March 1908; RJP/ICS/116/A/1907/July-Dec, King to Jebb, 30 December 1907.
[124] Bothwell, *The Penguin History*, p. 251; Ward, *White Canada Forever*, pp. 59, 74-5, 86.

But imperialists were not the only advocates for racial exclusionism. W.L.M. King (1874-1950), who investigated the question for Laurier as Minister of Labour, advised him to restrict "immigration from the Orient" to the greatest possible degree.[125] O.D. Skelton and John Ewart, moreover, echoed Goldwin Smith's view that "nativism and Imperialism do not hang well together."[126] Indeed, they impugned the idea that imperialism was compatible with the exclusion of British Indian subjects from Canada.[127] "Canada must be kept a white country," Skelton wrote, "even if new definitions of Empire have to be framed."[128] "Canada contends that her Constitution gives her complete control of the subject of 'Naturalization and Aliens,'" Ewart agreed, and "will, of course, win in the long run."[129] This was not, however, simply an excuse for independence - Ewart and Skelton both positively endorsed racial exclusion. This reflected, as Ewart put it, "the right of a vigorous and intelligent race to govern itself."[130] "Not desiring the presence of Indians," he wrote: "Canada so shaped her policy as to make their entry difficult...if anyone wishes to obtain an idea of the...embarrassments which inevitably follow upon the admission of polygamous Indians into a white Christian community, there is no literature better than the history of South Africa."[131] "Vancouver," Skelton similarly commented:

> has taken up the White Man's Burden...Sentiment seems slowly crystallizing for a white Canada...steadily the western attitude to the Asiatic is spreading east...Almost any brand of white man, in the second generation at least, when put through...the public school may make a good Canadian. But the Oriental...remains alien to the end of time, inscrutable, unassimilated, loyal only to his kind and his homeland, as dangerous by his virtues as by his vices.[132]

III

[125] LP/C-891/171794, King to Laurier, 6 June 1910.
[126] Smith, *Loyalty, Aristocracy and Jingoism*, p. 61.
[127] A point echoed by advocates for Sikh immigration. See Sunder Singh, "The Sikhs in Canada," *Addresses Delivered Before the Canadian Club of Toronto* (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter, 1912), pp. 86-91.
[128] O.D. Skelton, " Current Events," *QQ* 22:1 (1914), p. 100. See also Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, II, pp. 286-9.
[129] Ewart, "Colony to Kingdom," p. 274.
[130] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, I, p. 22.
[131] John Ewart, *Independence Papers*: *Reprints Principally from The Canadian nation and the Statesman* (Ottawa, 1921), pp. 6-9.
[132] O.D. Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 15:2 (1907), p. 156.

Though historian Robert Wardhaugh rightly notes that "attitudes of racial superiority...forced [Canada's] British majority to defend its cultural dominance," this was not only an imperialist or Prairie phenomenon.[133] Moreover, condemning exclusionism as "irrational" does not explain why Ontario liberals endorsed ideas of racial hierarchy.[134] Part of the answer, as James Pitsula argues, was a powerful sense of 'Britishness' - informed, but not entirely delineated, by Anglo-Saxonism.[135] 'White Canada,' then, was in fact a British and Anglo-Saxon Canada supplemented out of necessity by Europeans settlers while excluding Asian immigrants.

Anglo-Saxonism and British 'race patriotism,' furthermore, were fuelled as settlement sharply increased. At the height of the 'Laurier boom' from 1901-11 net migration into Canada reached 700,000-800,000 people, and explosive colonisation mitigated Canadians' desperation for non-Anglo settlers.[136] At the same time, opposition to Asian immigration intensified and liberal intellectuals increasingly feared that non-Anglo immigrants were overwhelming the Dominion's assimilative capacity, both in civic and racial terms. Unwilling to risk further dilution of Canada's British character and Anglo-Saxon racial stock, most liberals endorsed stricter controls over immigration. Politically, Wilfrid Laurier made concessions to racial exclusionism and Frank Oliver (1853-1953), Sifton's successor as Minister of the Interior and another Ontario emigrant to the North-West, placed further restrictions on 'undesirable' settlement.[137] Though immigration subsided during the Great War, liberals worried that demographic changes already threatened to fracture 'Greater Ontario,' Confederation, and the British Empire.

A British-American West?

[133] Robert Wardhaugh, "'Gateway to Empire: Imperial Sentiment in Winnipeg, 1867-1917," in *Imperial Canada, 1867-1917*, p. 210.
[134] Ward, *White Canada Forever*, p. 169.
[135] Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*, ch. 5.
[136] Randy Widdis, *With Scarcely a Ripple: Anglo-Canadian Migration into the United States and Western Canada, 1880-1920* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), p. 65.
[137] See especially CSP/208/162823/4, Dafoe to Sifton, 26 January 1921; Willison, "Immigration and Settlement," p. 103; J.S. Woodsworth, *Strangers Within our Gates: Or, Coming Canadians* (Toronto: F.C. Stephenson, 1909); Elizabeth Scott, "The Ill-name of the Old Country: London's Assisted Emigrants, British Unemployment Policy, and Canadian Immigration Restriction, 1905-1910," *JCHA* 26:1 (2015), pp. 99-130.

I

The development of the North-West was premised on an east-west national economy that linked manufacturing in Ontario with farming on the Prairies via the transcontinental railway. With this infrastructure in place and the West filling with settlers, John Willison wrote, Canada was "at last on the highway to nationhood."[138] But 'explosive colonisation' also disrupted Canadian politics as the Prairies diverged from Ontario, articulating a distinct regional perspective within Confederation and the British world.[139] While many Ontario liberals embraced imperialism and protectionism the agrarian West remained loyal to free trade and imperial decentralisation. This growing divide increasingly shaped Canadian politics and undermined Laurier's Liberal 'consensus' between 1910 and the end of the Great War.

While the British connection was foundational to Ontario, the North-West lacked the same historical consciousness. As W.L. Grant wrote, "the Canadian of the West tends, in politics at least, to be a Philistine, indifferent to the past...But east of Winnipeg the Canadian is to an almost amusing extent under the sway of historical tradition."[140] The West's high concentration of immigrants, whose attachment to the Empire was uncertain, further accentuated its divergence from Ontario.[141] John Willison expressed this common assumption: "the 'centre of Empire' in Canada is going westward and...a very great percentage of the Western people will have no natural sympathy with older Canada and no natural loyalty to the British Empire."[142] This reinforced Willison's own belief in Imperial union. "A preference in British markets," he claimed, along with "some exceptional position in the Empire," would "bring the West right."[143] Liberal autonomists, however, welcomed the addition of anti-imperial forces. Goldwin Smith claimed that the influx of Americans meant the "end

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[138] Willison, *The American Spirit,* pp. 7-8.
[139] Gerald Friesen, "The Western Canadian Identity," *HP* 8:1 (1973), pp. 13-19.
[140] [W.L. Grant], "Canada and Anglo-American Relations," *RT* 4:13 (1913), p. 106.
[141] See for example WP/11/92/7899-900, Denison to Willison, 17 July 1910; J. Castell Hopkins, *Western Canada and the Empire: Before the United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada at Toronto on April 10th, and, in its chief features, before the Canadian Club, Hamilton, on March 13th, 1913* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913), p. 7.
[142] RBP/C-4440/485, Willison to Oliver (copy), in Willison to Borden, 18 December 1911.
[143] Ibid.

of running Canada solely in the interest...of Great Britain,"[144] while John Ewart agreed that Americans would "never be Imperialists."[145] This equally applied to continental Europeans, as John Dafoe confided to Clifford Sifton:

> Imperial issues bring the foreign-born people more and more in sympathy with Liberalism. These people...cannot be turned into Imperialists of the Col. Denison hand; and the Liberal policy of 'Canada First'...ought to appeal powerfully to them. Personally, I rather welcome the addition of political forces that may modify the influence of the Orange-Jingo-Loyalist-body which is deeply prejudiced against Liberalism and is impervious to argument.[146]

But despite the flood of British, American, and European settlers, by 1911 roughly half of the North-West's population was Canadian-born and displayed a strong sense of Britannic nationalism.[147] Indeed, there was a marked difference between recent arrivals from the United Kingdom and native-born Canadians, or between Britons and 'British-Americans.' The former, as historian David E. Smith argues, were not mere "reinforcements for the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture," having themselves "little knowledge...of Canada."[148] "The English born," George Wrong observed, "regard themselves frankly as colonists...The Canadian, on the other hand, has a strong national feeling...and he is restive under the colonial tie. If the British Empire is to be united more closely it will be the Canadian born who are most keen for it."[149] The West, Edward Kylie agreed, "thinks large."[150] The task for liberal imperialists, then, was to determine "what the West wants."[151] In this respect, the opinions of Sifton and Dafoe were significant. Both men, though, opposed imperial centralisation and were sceptical of the Round Table movement. As Dafoe wrote to Wrong:

> I have never regarded the members of the movement in London as other than protagonists...of their own scheme for Empire consolidation...[and] I have regarded the Canadian members of the Round Table as persons who were being shepherded along a definite path to a predetermined end...my attitude towards the Round Table movement is one of frank suspicion.[152]

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[144] HBP/M-721, Smith to Bourassa, 8 February 1903.
[145] AMP/35/197, Ewart to Milner, 11 May 1909.
[146] CSP/157/127183/79-80, Dafoe to Sifton, 19 March 1904.
[147] Widdis, *Scarcely a Ripple*, p. 296.
[148] Smith, "Instilling British Values in the Prairie Provinces," pp. 441, 443.
[149] GWP/B2003/005/008/59, diary, 4/5 July 1916.
[150] RTP/777/91, Kylie to Wrong (copy), 22 June 1912.
[151] RTP/818/147-8, 193-4, Glazebrook to Kerr, 26 October 1916; GWP/B2003/005/002/55, Wrong to Curtis (copy), 22 May 1912; RTP/777/29, Wrong to Curtis, 22 May 1912.
[152] GWP/B2003/005/002/57, Dafoe to Wrong, 16 October 1916. See also WP/37/286/27533, Sifton to Willison, 13 May 1916.

Liberal imperialists, in turn, recognised that Dafoe and Sifton were "anti-Round Table."[153] Arthur Glazebrook, for instance, regarded Dafoe as "perfectly hopeless...without any breadth of view,"[154] while John Willison - who remained close to Sifton - dismissed Dafoe as "a partisan before he is a citizen."[155] George Wrong, however, more accurately and sympathetically characterised Dafoe's position, which he noted was shared by Sifton. Their views, he concluded, reflected a distinctly Western Canadian Britannic nationalism.[156] Not only did the "free man from the west" resent the "superior" attitude of British and particularly English imperialists, but the West's position within Confederation further reinforced their staunchly autonomist views. Dafoe, as Wrong reported:

> had so much difficulty in getting eastern Canada to do justice to western Canada that he was not going to take any chances on the control of any part of Canadian affairs by persons more remote...he would put Canadian citizenship on a complete equality with English citizenship...by proclaiming the complete sovereignty of Canada...This would not be a hostile but a friendly act preparatory to an enduring alliance.[157]

Western Canadians, Wrong discerned, did not want to secede from the Empire, but demanded "complete equality" with Great Britain: "These people are passionately British, but they are not English, and rather damn the English."[158]

II

By the 1910s conceptions of Canada's place in the British Empire differed between the agrarian West and an increasingly urban Ontario. As Arthur Glazebrook noted, "Toronto is really...the eastern extremity of the North-West...and the type of man in the West shades off as you go East into the Ontario type."[159] But even liberal imperialists did not doubt that the "national spirit" was "as intense

[153] AGP/Glazebrook to Milner (copy), 27 July 1916.
[154] Ibid.
[155] RTP/822/183, Willison to E. Grigg, 7 October 1913.
[156] See especially Korneski, *Race, Nation, and Reform Ideology in Winnipeg*, pp. 135-50.
[157] AMP/371/350, 352, "Extracts."
[158] GWP/B2004-0010/ 005/06, Wrong to Murray Wrong, 29 July 1916.
[159] Quoted in Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 154.

and dominant" among Western Canadians "as in older Canada."[160] "It may be," John Willison surmised

> that in the West 'Imperialism' is less vocal and that greater emphasis is laid upon the ideals of democracy. But the difference is in language rather than in spirit. For the time the West is concerned to make itself rather than to remake the Empire. It has an Empire of its own to settle, its own institutions to establish and expand...[and] a many-tongued population to mould into a common citizenship...but [the West] does not think of separation either from older Canada or from the empire.[161]

Western Canadian views of Dominion nation-building were thus premised on a "fresh incarnation" of Ontario's Grit liberal tradition that envisaged a self-governing and free-trading British Empire based on local autonomy.[162] Westerners, in short, embraced a 'Gladstonian' Greater Britain that reflected their regional perspective and the North-West's ideological origins in neo-Ontarian liberalism. Moreover, the Prairies' distance from both coasts, combined with an agricultural economy, meant that Western farmers were more interested in cross-border than trans-oceanic trade.[163] Even Willison, who now exemplified an urban, protectionist, and imperialistic Toronto liberalism, admitted that "if Free Trade is the test of loyalty to the Empire, the truer faith is held by Canadian Liberals...[and] more orthodox is the faith of the [Western farmers]."[164] The North-West's divergence from Ontario, however, was exacerbated by its minimal political influence at Ottawa. The Dominion Government's claim to jurisdiction over the West's natural resources, the cost of exporting produce by rail to the East, and the imposition of Ontario-centric economic policies nourished Western alienation.[165] This was predicted by Goldwin Smith as early as 1891: "When the North-West is peopled...with a population partly drawn from the United States and other quarters not Canadian,

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[160] [Willison], "Canada: East and West," p. 163.
[161] Ibid., pp. 163-4.
[162] David H. Laycock, *Populism and Democratic Thought in the Canadian Prairies, 1910-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 25.
[163] Except during the Great War, when rising grain prices corresponded with the growth of exports to the United Kingdom. John Herd Thompson, *The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1978), pp. 59-63.
[164] Willison, *The New Canada*, p. 15.
[165] Laycock, *Populism and Democratic Thought*, pp. 25-30.

it being locally far removed and commercially disunited from the eastern parts of the Dominion, what will be the effect on the cohesion and stability of Confederation?"[166]

Indeed, 'Greater Ontario' was increasingly at odds over the National Policy. "It would be idle to deny," John Willison wrote, "that some apprehensions are entertained in Eastern Canada as to the temper of the relations between the older and the newer Provinces and as to the permanent unity and integrity of the Confederation."[167] This prompted George Parkin to suggest a campaign of British settlement to temper "the new American element...[and] make co-operation against the East impossible."[168] Parkin, however, misunderstood the causes of Western discontent whereas Willison recognised that high taxes and freight rates motivated Western antipathy towards Eastern-dominated railways and the Dominion government.[169] He consequently advocated parliamentary redistribution and Western control over their natural resources to mitigate regional tensions.[170] But it was also true that Western development was subsidised by Ontario. "We in older Canada," Willison wrote years earlier

> ask why it is that we...maintain the Northwest mounted police, a splendid force which carries into every corner of those vast territories the moral authority of British institutions, and we are told...that until population can be increased and concentrated the cost of the preservation of order and of the administration of [Western] affairs must be largely borne by older Canada.[171]

It was reasonable, then, that Ontario had financed western colonisation and it was right that the West should assume full provincial autonomy. Westerners, Willison understood, were "restless under restraint and aggressive in the assertion of their own opinions and interests." Dominion nation-building, moreover, required compromise: "A contented and prosperous West means a great deal to the older provinces and it is impossible to have a united Dominion if any section of the

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[166] Smith, *Canadian Question*, p. 199.
[167] WP/53/39802, Untitled speech [1912?].
[168] GWP/B2003/005/004/3-3, Parkin to Wrong, 10 March 1911.
[169] WP/53/39812-15, Untitled speech [1912?]
[170] RTP/822/178-9, Willison to Grigg, 19 August 1913; JDP/M-73, Willison to Dafoe, 20 December 1920; WP/11/86/7438-9, Willison to Dafoe (copy), 20 December 1920.
[171] John Willison, *The Railway Question in Canada: With an examination of the railway law of Iowa* (Toronto: Warwick bros. & Rutter, 1897), p. 40.

country...feels that its interests are sacrificed at the demand of any corporation or...element of the Commonwealth."[172]

Western alienation, though, had deep ideological roots. The legacy of Grit liberalism nurtured distrust of corporate interests and remote governments, and the North-West inherited Ontario liberals' old antagonism towards the centralising 'Macdonald system.' This fostered political radicalism and underpinned Western Canada's commitment to egalitarianism, free-trade, and local democracy.[173] Indeed, it is illuminating that upon John Dafoe's arrival in the North-West he sought to establish the "bona fides" of the Manitoba *Free Press* through a "resolute attitude towards the railways, the grain men, the manufacturers, and corporate influences generally."[174] In other words, by opposition to the Ontario and Quebec-dominated urban interests that defended imperialism and upheld the National Policy.[175]

III

Wilfrid Laurier thus risked the 1911 election knowing that the West supported his campaign against "the railroads, corporations, banks, manufacturers, conservatives, the Church, the Imperialists and the [Quebec] Nationalists."[176] He never doubted Western Canadians' commitment to Confederation or the British Empire, provided that their interests were respected.[177] In the next chapter, we shall examine in detail the arguments over free trade and protectionism that defined the 1911 campaign. Yet here it is sufficient to note that while freer trade was popular in rural Ontario and with Western farmers, the industrialisation of Ontario and the proximate cause of the defection of Clifford Sifton and the Toronto 'Liberal plutocracy' helped to ensure the Liberal Government's defeat.

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[172] WP, 51/2/37603, Untitled speech [1921?]
[173] Laycock, *Populism and Democratic Thought*, pp. 25-30.
[174] CSP/97/76245/51, Dafoe to Sifton, 27 November 1901.
[175] See for example WLGP/10, Walker to W.L. Grant, 13 November 1911.
[176] JDP/M-73, Laurier to Dafoe, 27 September 1911.
[177] JBP/USA/31/71-2, Grey to Bryce, 30 January 1911.

Laurier's relative success on the Prairies, however, convinced John Dafoe that the West was the true "Gibraltar of Liberalism."[178] Though too weak to dictate terms to Ontario,[179] it was obvious in retrospect that the West's political and economic interests, "diverge[d] sharply from those of eastern Canada, and as a large percentage of the population know nothing of eastern Canada...the differences between these two sections...are apt to take the form of violent political disagreements."[180] Moreover, as John Willison noted, there was "a formidable element of British free-traders and American progressives in the grain provinces."[181] These crucial factors fuelled the emergence of a radical agrarian and Western-oriented political movement. This was initially contained within the Liberal party, but if the West "were to be retained for Liberalism," Dafoe claimed, "it would only be by the development of a Radical wing of the party...without much regard to...the desires of the Eastern leaders."[182] Wilfrid Laurier, he claimed in a letter to Sifton, "had no objection to developments in this character."[183]

Willison equally understood the significance of these developments and believed that Western support was vital to an imperially-minded Conservative Government. "Surely it is in the West," he wrote to Robert Borden in 1911, "that [we] must chiefly build for the future."[184] The danger, Willison argued, was a potential alliance between Quebec and the West's 'foreign element' that would indelibly rupture the political connection between Ontario and the West. But as "the Western Liberal leaders have the confidence of these elements...security for Canada and the Empire lies in a union of Eastern Conservatives with Western Liberals."[185] In short, in 'Greater Ontario.' Yet Borden was unwilling or unable to placate the Western agrarian radicalism fuelled by the Great

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[178] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Laurier (copy), 18 November 1912.
[179] CSP/193/154612/67-73, Dafoe to Sifton, 16 August 1910.
[180] John Dafoe, "Problems of Canada," in C.J.B. Hurst (ed.) *Great Britain and the Dominions: Lectures on the Harris Foundation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), p. 136.
[181] Willison, *The New Canada*, p. 51.
[182] CSP/205/161401/15, Dafoe to Sifton, 12 February 1917; JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Sifton (copy), 12 February 1917.
[183] Ibid.
[184] RBP/C-4353/69920, Willison to Borden, 5 October 1911.
[185] RBP/C-4319/40550-51, Willison to Borden, 23 July 1917; WP/4/32/2512, Willison to Borden (draft), 22 July 1917.

War.[186] By mid-1917 Dafoe warned that T.A. Crerar (1876-1975), the leader of the radical Grain Growers Association, intended to "capture the entire West, sending a wholly independent group to Ottawa."[187] Oscar Skelton wrote to Laurier in a similar vein: "One good result promises to come out of the present chaos - the dominance of Toronto in Canadian politics is pretty well ended. Another is that the Eastern Liberals will be forced to take a really liberal stand...if they are to hold their Western colleagues."[188]

Expansion onto marginal land, the decline of wheat prices, and the collapse of the West's great economic boom - the full extent of which was disguised by the Great War - contributed to the radicalisation of Prairie politics that culminated with demobilisation, the rise of the Western farmer-led Progressive party, and the Winnipeg General Strike.[189] So too, as Carl Berger argued, did political factors, including "increasing urban dominance...the transition from a laissez-faire to a managed economy, and...[a] political system that was the instrument of metropolitan interests."[190] Prior to the end of the war it was already clear to John Willison that "in Western Canada there seems to be a complete eradication of old party prejudices and loyalties...We are at the end of an era. No power can re-establish the old idols or recreate the old divisions.[191] This fracturing of 'Greater Ontario,' however, had its origins in the neo-Ontarian Grit liberalism originally implanted in the North-West. This agrarian, democratic ideology shaped Western conceptions of Confederation and the British Empire based on free trade, egalitarian democracy, and local autonomy. Indeed, Western liberals remained faithful to a renewed version of this programme and united with Ontario farmers as Progressives.[192] But the North-West did not reject Dominion nation-building or Britannic nationalism. Instead, Westerners refashioned these ideas in their own image and asserted a Western liberal

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[186] Mary Janigan, *Let the Eastern Bastards Freeze in the Dark: The West Versus the Rest Since Confederation* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), ch. 6.
[187] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Sifton (copy), 27 June 1917.
[188] LP/C-913/196347-8, Skelton to Laurier, 7 August 1917.
[189] CSP/200/158727/1-2, Dafoe to Sifton, 1 March 1913. See also Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 418-22; Thompson, *The Harvests of War*, pp. 13-17.
[190] Carl Berger, "Region and Nation," in Carl Berger (ed.), *The West and the Nation: Essays in Honour of W.L. Morton* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976), p. 14.
[191] [Willison], "Canada: East and West," pp. 166
[192] English, *The Decline of Politics*, pp. 215-17.

vision of 'British America.' As John Dafoe explained, Progressives were "nothing more or less than...liberal[s] of the type with which [we] were quite familiar before 1896."[193]

Conclusion

The development of the Canadian North-West was fundamental to the growth and consolidation of the Dominion and to Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal party. Laurier and many of his Ontario liberal contemporaries recalled the completion of the CPR and the dispossession of the West's Indigenous and Métis inhabitants; they lived to see a neo-Ontarian Prairie liberalism emerge as a political force capable of breaking the Dominion's established party-system. The colonisation of the North-West by Ontarian settlers had assured its Anglo-Canadian and Britannic nationalist character. In addition, John Dafoe confidently reported:

> American and British immigration - all English-speaking (though many of the settlers from the United States are of Scandinavian or German descent) and all habituated to self-government - [...] increase yearly the preponderance of the English-speaking element...From the mingling of these races there will emerge a new type, 'which will be British, not exactly in the sense which we know, but in a sense very like the sense which we know.'[194]

At the same time, the Prairies remained wedded to a regionally-adapted Grit liberal ideology. Though by 1919 few Ontario liberals recognised Western political radicalism as their progeny, they had created a neo-Ontario that was nationalistic; committed to British institutions and local autonomy; and largely populated by British, American, and Anglo-Canadian settlers. By the close of the 'Laurier era,' the 'White Canada' immigration policy assured that the West's Anglo-Saxon racial ascendancy was firmly established. In retrospect, John Willison argued, Ottawa's "huge expenditures" in the West were vindicated by "the commercial and political unification of the country and as deliberate measures of national policy."[195] But as 'Old' Ontario urbanised and

[193] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Sifton (copy), 10 November 1920.
[194] John Dafoe, "Economic History of the Prairie Provinces, 1870-1913," in Adam Short and Arthur Doughty (eds.), *Canada and its Provinces: A History of the Canadian People and their Institutions by One Hundred Associates*, XX, (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Company, 1914), p. 310.
[195] WP/53/39804, Untitled speech [1912?].

industrialised its growing divergence from the Western 'neo-Ontario' became acute. Perhaps no issue was more significant in this respect than free trade, and it is to these debates that we now turn.

5

Free trade and Tariff Reform

"Although Sir Wilfrid Laurier is...a Free Trader...he has not in practice found himself able to do much...in the way of putting his theories into effect."[1]
- Governor-General Lord Grey, 1911

When John Macdonald instituted the 'National Policy' in 1878, "Canada had set out on a career of economic nationalism."[2] It was a course upon which most Ontario liberal intellectuals were never comfortable, yet it set the terms for Canada's nation-building discourse throughout the 'Laurier era.' At the height of Britain's free trade empire high tariffs grated against liberal sensibilities, though economic protectionism served as a declaration of Canadian intent to forge an independent destiny in North America. Subsequently, John Willison claimed, "protectionism and patriotism" became "almost synonymous terms" in Canadian politics.[3] Liberals, however, largely rejected the conflation of protectionism and patriotism, and instead promoted free trade as a means to national prosperity and equity for their agrarian supporters. Protectionism, they argued, was a corrupt bargain between John Macdonald's Conservatives and urban Ontario's manufacturers. Worse, it was justified in the emotive terms of Canadian nationalism, imperial 'loyalty,' and fear of American domination. "Is it your opinion," Wilfrid Laurier asked Conservatives, "that if there be to the south of us accessible fields of wealth, we should be deterred...by the cowardly consideration that...prosperity would seduce us from our allegiance?"[4]

The shifting political context further shaped debates over free trade. Two related points are worth highlighting. First was the Greater British 'recolonisation' of Canada - defined by rising British investment in the Dominion and Canadian exports to Britain - which fueled Canadian economic growth from 1897-1913. This 'Laurier boom' tightened Canada's cultural and commercial links within

[1] JBP/USA/31/36-8, Grey to Bryce, 5 January 1911.
[2] Creighton, *Canada's First Century*, p. 25.
[3] WP/51/2/37634-5, untitled speech [n.d.].
[4] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 5 April 1888.

the British world and reduced its dependence on the American market.[5] Second was a growing ideological conflict across the British world over free trade and protectionism; or as Frank Underhill put it: "between Cobden and Chamberlain[.]"[6] The growing influence of the latter was, in effect, an ideological product of the 'recolonisation' of the British world economy. And yet Canadian historians often present continental free trade as an alternative to Britishness and protectionism as synonymous with imperialism.[7] This chapter, by contrast, argues that most liberal free traders envisaged Canada as part of a 'Gladstonian' Greater Britain, while many - perhaps most - liberal imperialists equally upheld free trade. First, it outlines the rise and fall of 'Unrestricted Reciprocity.' Next, it turns to debates over Imperial preferences and the pan-Britannic campaign for tariff reform. Finally, it explores the role of free trade in the demise of the Laurier administration in 1911. As we shall see, the goal of freer trade was central to Laurier's Liberal consensus. Indeed, for most 'Greater Ontario' liberals North America was not an economic alternative to Britishness - it was a free trade alternative to protectionism and tariff reform.

Unrestricted Reciprocity

I

In 1891 Canada languished in a prolonged depression. Confederation failed to stimulate an economic 'boom' and the National Policy had not revived the Dominion's fortunes. On the contrary, during the 1870s and 1880s an estimated 825,000 'British-Americans' left for the United States.[8] "Commercial atrophy," Goldwin Smith only slightly exaggerated, "has already driven a million of native Canadians South of the line."[9] Western Ontario farmers were especially affected. Globally depressed agricultural prices and high North American tariffs limited Canadian exports to the United

[5] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 415-16.
[6] Underhill, "Goldwin Smith," p. 285.
[7] See for example Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, p. 183; Dutil and Mackenzie, *Canada 1911*, p. 285.
[8] Bothwell, *Your Country, My Country*, pp. 121-2.
[9] JBP/16/67, Smith to Bryce, 9 April 1889.

States, inflated the cost of manufactured goods, and fuelled agrarian radicalism.[10] Toronto, however, diverged from its rural hinterland and "industrialized substantially" under protectionism.[11] In this context, agrarian liberals pressed Wilfrid Laurier to endorse radical free trade measures even as urban interests aligned against him. Richard Cartwright informed the new Liberal leader that "matters have been moving fast in Ontario...It is doubtful whether any public meeting can be held in a rural district without expressing a pretty decided opinion as to Commercial Union."[12]

Since Britain's abolition of mercantilism Canadians had sought freer access to the American market. Both political parties lauded the 1854-66 Reciprocity Treaty that liberalised North American trade and relieved Upper Canada's economic depression.[13] But Commercial Union, or a customs union with the United States, was a radical departure. "The object of Commercial Union," argued Goldwin Smith, its leading advocate, was "to bring Canada within the commercial pale of her own continent, and thereby end the commercial atrophy which her isolation entails."[14] This especially appealed "in Ontario and, more particularly, within the region...of radical agrarian political sentiment...the Western Ontario peninsula."[15] By 1887 the Toronto *Globe* took up Commercial Unionism. "Canada," it claimed, "if commercially united with the States and politically with Great Britain, would be a living link of friendship between the greater communities...which is the noblest project...of our race."[16]

Laurier shared this enthusiasm for free trade, which had "always been one of the articles of the Liberal programme."[17] Yet he wavered over Commercial Union. "The commercial union idea may be realizable and it may also be surrounded by insurmountable difficulties," he argued. "But...the

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[10] Pennington, *The Destiny of Canada*, p. 53.
[11] Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 408.
[12] LP/C-737/459-61, Cartwright to Laurier, 8 July 1887.
[13] Kenneth Norrie, Douglas Owram, and J.C. Herbert Emery, *A History of the Canadian Economy*, 3rd ed. (Scarborough, ON: Nelson, 2002), pp. 151-6.
[14] Smith, *Canadian Question*, p. 281. See also Goldwin Smith (ed.), *Handbook of Commercial Union: A Collection of Papers Read before the Commercial Union Club, Toronto, with Speeches, Letters and Other Documents in Favour of Unrestricted Reciprocity with the United States, Preceded by an Introduction by Mr. Goldwin Smith* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co, 1888).
[15] Brown, *Canada's National Policy*, p. 135.
[16] *TG*, 27 April 1887, quoted in Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 128.
[17] Laurier, "Speech at Somerset, 1887," *Laurier on the Platform*, p. 385.

time has come...to show the American people that we are brothers, and to hold out our hands to them, with a due regard...to our mother-country."[18] Conscious of Britannic sentiment in Ontario, Laurier outlined an ambitious vision for "a commercial alliance between all the Anglo-Saxon nations":

> We know that the Anglo-Saxon race is the great commercial race of the world...I believe a time will come when [the] British communities will find it to their advantage to have amongst them universal Free Trade...And I say that if anything is calculated to bring about that result, it is the establishment of intimate commercial relations between the great English speaking peoples of this continent.[19]

Outside Grit liberal circles, however, there was widespread fear that Commercial Union, as Joseph Chamberlain wrote, "must inevitably be followed at no long date by a political union and the separation of Canada from Great Britain."[20] Anglo-Canadian imperialists suspected that annexation to the republic was the true aim of the "insidious scheme."[21] Though not all Commercial Unionists were annexationists, the idea was fatally undermined by its association with Goldwin Smith and the belief that a "customs union, if secured would necessarily lead in the direction of Mr. Smith's desires."[22]

II

There were, therefore, reasons to doubt the motives of Anglo-Canadian and particularly American Commercial Unionists. As John Willison put it to Laurier: "Do you think that these men at Washington...want to build up a great British...power on this continent?"[23] In consequence, "commercial union with the United States...[was] watered down to unrestricted reciprocity" prior to the 1891 election.[24] This was not a mere semantic change. Whereas Commercial Union entailed a common North American tariff, 'Unrestricted Reciprocity' prescribed the bilateral elimination of

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[18] Ibid., p. 385.
[19] Laurier, "Speech at Oakville, 1888," p. 460.
[20] GSP/M-552, Chamberlain to Smith, 13 September 1887.
[21] Denison, *Imperial Unity*, p. 82.
[22] WDGP/1/1891, Charlton to Gregory, 8 December 1891; Pennington, *The Destiny of Canada*, pp. 54-73.
[23] LP/ C-737/1199, Willison to Laurier, 5 January 1890.
[24] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 225.

duties but the maintenance of independent tariffs towards the rest of the world.[25] Ontario liberals, Willison claimed, were "not quite commercial unionists, but loyal to unrestricted Reciprocity[.]"[26] When he became editor of the Toronto *Globe* in 1890, then, he promoted the policy "to the utmost possible extent."[27] It was essential, Laurier instructed Willison, to focus on "the trade question...This really is the most pressing reform."[28] In Toronto, however, imperialists continued to attack reciprocity as "the work of Yankee emissaries, and home traitors who are trying to weaken Canadian loyalty."[29] Laurier responded by affirming the British connection. It was "anti-Canadian, and even anti-British," he claimed, "[t]o pretend that our colonial allegiance demands...that we should be deterred from the spirit of enterprise."[30] Even Goldwin Smith conceded that "continental free trade...need not, so far as I can see, entail any change of political relations."[31]

But anti-reciprocity forces were strengthened by the American McKinley Bill (1890), which targeted Canada and the British Empire with a higher tariff. As historian Marc-William Palen argues, this "was viewed by many as an attempt at annexation...and enhanced global calls for a Greater Britain tied economically between England and its white colonies[.]"[32] American protectionism, as Willison recalled, "immensely restricted the market for our natural products...[and] forced us to seek markets in Great Britain and...the Empire."[33] Leading Ontario Liberals, moreover, feared that even Unrestricted Reciprocity would lead to annexation. Edward Blake's non-participation in the 1891 election and his denunciation of reciprocity damaged the Liberals in urban Ontario, while the discovery of an annexationist pamphlet written by *Globe* editorialist Edward Farrer fuelled accusations of Liberal 'disloyalty.'[34]

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[25] Graham, "Liberal Party Trade Policy, 1887," pp. 14-15.
[26] LP/C-737/748, Willison to Laurier, 19 July 1888.
[27] LP/C-737/927, Willison to Laurier 17 June 1889.
[28] WP/24/179/17685, Laurier to Willison, 18 June 1890.
[29] GDP/3-4/1885, Denison to Salisbury (copy), 9 December 1890.
[30] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 5 April 1888.
[31] JBP/16/71, Smith to Bryce, 7 May 1891.
[32] Marc-William Palen, "Protection, Federation and Union: The Global Impact of the McKinley Tariff upon the British Empire, 1890-94," *JICH* 38:3 (2010), pp. 409-10.
[33] WP/51/2/37634-5, untitled speech [n.d.].
[34] Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 228-34; Underhill, "Laurier and Blake," pp. 405-8; Pennington, *The Destiny of Canada*, pp. 127-8; Clippingdale, *Willison*, p. 65.

Despite the Conservatives' 1891 victory, as we have seen, Laurier solidified the Liberals' hold over Ontario's agrarian southwest. This was due in large measure to the argument that free trade was compatible with Britannic nationalism. As George Denison reported: "The Conservatives opened the fight on the straight issue of Loyalty vs Disloyalty...[but] I am very much disappointed in the result of the elections...The Conservatives...lost heavily in the Border Counties of Ontario...where the McKinley Bill had struck the hardest."[35] In the aftermath of the election, however, Laurier aimed to broaden his appeal to moderate liberals and imperialists, including G.M. Grant, who were uncomfortable with Unrestricted Reciprocity yet supported freer trade.[36] John Willison outlined this approach in an 1892 letter:

> I feel that the general line...ought to be much the same as during the last four or five years but...we must not admit the idea of a common [North American] tariff. There are many Liberals who would go further than this...but there are many Liberals who will not go further and the loyalty cry...reaps the Conservatives a solid body...we should assail the [National Policy] on every occasion and urge a general reduction of duties. We want reciprocity...on terms that will not infringe on our national integrity, if we cannot make such an arrangement...we must radically reduce and reform the tariff.[37]

Thus in an attempt to reconcile urban Ontario, Britannic sentiment, and freer trade, the Liberal party's 1893 platform declared that Canada's tariff "should be so adjusted as to make free, or to bear as lightly as possible upon, the necessities of life, and...promote freer trade with the whole world, more particularly with Great Britain and the United States." Such a policy, it claimed, was in "the interests alike of the Dominion and of the Empire[.]"[38]

III

Canadian historians have provided three main explanations for the Liberals' rejection of Unrestricted Reciprocity: first, that the change was more cosmetic than substantive, and that the Liberals used tariff diplomacy to leverage Canada's independence[39]; second, that Laurier embraced protectionism

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[35] GDP/5-6/1959-60, Denison to Salisbury (copy), 7 March 1891.
[36] See for example, *TG*, 7 November 1893.
[37] LP/C-738/2208, Willison to Laurier, 4 August 1892.
[38] *Platform of the Liberal Party 1893*, p. 4.
[39] R.A. Shields, "Imperial Policy and Canadian-American Commercial Relations, 1880-1911," *Historical Research* 59:139 (1986), pp. 108-21.

out of "deepening cynicism" and electoral considerations[40]; and third, that the United States' habitual rejection of Canadian entreaties forced the Liberals into a half-hearted pursuit of imperial trade.[41]

These narrowly domestic interpretations, however, overlook global and imperial factors. Indeed, Laurier's argument for continental free trade was connected to a wider vision of freer trade across the Anglo-world. At the same time, the Australian 'bust' and the American 'Panic of 1893' amplified the short term impact of the McKinley tariff. Though John Willison worried that "fear of a business collapse such as that which the United States has experienced" would be invoked by opponents of free trade, it was clear that "protection has not prevented [a] very serious depression in Canada."[42] The Liberals thus endorsed freer trade but emphasised the stability of the British connection. At the 1893 Liberal Convention, as George Denison observed: "Sir Oliver Mowat was pushed to the front...due to his loyalty...and the 'Unrestricted Reciprocity' fad was decently buried...The death blow to the [annexationist] movement however has been the financial distress in the States."[43]

American protectionism and depression, therefore, combined with Britannic nationalism to reinforce Anglo-Canadian interest in Greater British trade.[44] Even the Patrons of Industry, a radical agrarian protest party, favoured "free trade with Great Britain even [more] than with the United States," and firmly endorsed "the maintenance of British connection."[45] As Willison recalled: "I represented to Mr. Laurier that...it was necessary to recede from [Unrestricted Reciprocity]...rather than to persist in flagrant defiance of the British sentiment of the country...this was a common feeling among Liberals."[46] This was not, however, an abandonment of free trade. On the contrary, as G.M. Grant wrote to Willison, it was necessary to "work for Free Trade...along the line of least

[40] Underhill, *Canadian Liberalism*, p. 18.
[41] James A. Colvin, "Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the British Preferential Tariff System," *RCHA* 34:1 (1955), pp. 13-23.
[42] LP/C-739/3394-5, Willison to Laurier, 29 November 1894.
[43] GDP/5-6/2420, Denison to Salisbury (copy), 12 August 1893.
[44] Palen, "Protection, Federation and Union," pp. 407-8.
[45] WDGP/1/1892M-Z, C.A. Mallory to T.M. White, 31 October 1892; Ramsay Cook, "Presidential Address: Tillers and Toilers: The Rise and Fall of Populism in Canada in the 1890s," *HP* 19:1 (1984), pp. 1-20.
[46] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 296.

resistance...[and] surely the line of greatest resistance at present is the U.S., with McKinley as the [Presidential] favourite."[47] But while American protectionism stifled freer continental trade, London's policy of unilateral free trade thwarted a Canadian preference in British markets. Canadians, moreover, conducted limited trade with distant and protectionist Australia and New Zealand. Perhaps the most important impediment to freer trade, though, was domestic. As Grant observed:

> The most formidable opponents we have to Free Trade are the Canadian manufacturers. They dread Free Trade with Britain, or any approach to it, as much as with the U.S. But they conceal their dread [and] their hostility, covering it with the old flag, and love to represent those disloyal Grits as favouring commercial union with the States [and] discrimination against Great Britain.[48]

Since unilateral tariff reductions were politically treacherous, and neither Britain nor the United States could or would reciprocate Canadian overtures, there was no reason for Laurier to further alienate Ontario's urban manufacturers. Further, by 1895 the tariff was overtaken by the Manitoba Schools Question as the crisis at hand.[49] In this context, Willison informed Laurier that that Richard Cartwright, whose name was synonymous with Commercial Union, was "not popular"[50] in Ontario and doing "harm, not good in Toronto."[51] Though Laurier sought to "bring back public opinion to the tariff," domestic and external pressures forced him to temper free trade sentiment, appeasing the manufacturing and financial interests that benefited from protectionism.[52] In the next decade, these industries produced the "Liberal plutocracy" that reflected Laurier's entente with urban, industrial, and imperial Ontario and smoothed the Liberals' path to power.[53]

Protection and Imperial Preference

I

[47] WP/17/130, G.M. Grant to Willison, 9 April 1896.
[48] Ibid; JBP/72/80, G.M. Grant to Bryce, 27 October 1890.
[49] Brown, *Canada's National Policy*, pp. 265-6.
[50] LP/C-740/3922, Willison to Laurier, 29 December 1895
[51] LP/C-739/3429, 19 December 1894.
[52] WP/24/179/17720, Laurier to Willison, 30 March 1895; Dilley, *Finance, Politics, and Imperialism*, ch. 5.
[53] Creighton, *Canada's First Century*, pp. 85-91.

Prior to the 1896 election, therefore, Laurier published an open letter in the *Globe* claiming that "the intention of the Liberal party is not and never was to establish absolute free trade in this country." A revenue tariff of "stability and permanency," he argued, would ensure that "the manufacturing class would find the security which it needs, and the consuming classes that relief which they must have."[54] Protectionists and imperialists were further mollified when Richard Cartwright was "kept...absolutely in the background" of the Liberal campaign.[55] This corresponded to Willison's advice that:

> In view of the critical condition of many manufacturing establishments throughout the country, the general stagnation, [and] the fear of the banks of trade disturbance, I fear that to put Sir Richard Cartwright into the Government may precipitate a very serious scare with unfortunate consequences.[56]

While Laurier thought "it would be impossible not to take [Cartwright] into the cabinet," his appointment of W.S. Fielding as Minister of Finance indicated a conservative approach to tariff revision.[57] In another symbolic gesture he retained Lord Strathcona (1820-1914) - the Scottish-born, Montreal magnate whose career highlights included the Hudson's Bay Company, the CPR, and the Bank of Montreal - as High Commissioner in London.[58] "The tariff," Laurier wrote to Willison, "should not be reformed...except after ample discussion with the businessmen, and by consulting with them...we will do a good deal to avert the consequences, which you fear, of the uncertainty as to the future."[59]

Laurier also faced political pressure to discard "free trade theory," as Clifford Sifton wrote, "when it is plainly not in our business interests."[60] Moreover, William McKinley's election as President in 1896 and the passage of the "anti-Canadian" Dingley Tariff reinforced the view that

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[54] *TG*, 3 June 1896; Willison, *Laurier*, II, p. 288-9.
[55] GDP/7-8/3136, Denison to Salisbury (copy), 15 December 1896.
[56] LP/C-740/4668, Willison to Laurier, 25 June 1896; WP/24/179, Willison to Laurier (copy), 25 June 1896.
[57] WP/24/179, Laurier to Willison, 29 June 1896.
[58] Donna McDonald, *Lord Strathcona: A Biography of Donald Alexander Smith* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2002 [1996]), ch. 17.
[59] WP/ 24/179, Laurier to Willison, 29 June 1896.
[60] LP/C-749/14273, Sifton to Laurier, 29 April 1897.

American protectionists were hostile to Canada.[61] In this context, as historian Andrew Dilley argues, Laurier was forced to make "virtue of necessity" in the pursuit of freer trade.[62] And the necessity, Laurier wrote, was "to take the American tariff - if conceived in hostility to Canada - [and] make it the Canadian tariff."[63] In short, as a Grit free trader put it: "[W]e may just as well tell the Yankee to go to Hades and we will go to England."[64] Here, then, was the impetus to Laurier's preferential tariff in favour of British goods, a measure that strongly appealed to Anglo-Canadians.[65] "[T]he press of the country, both Liberal and Conservative," Willison confirmed, "seems to be almost unanimous in favor of a pro-British tariff."[66] It was, in John Darwin's phrase, "a shrewd sop to freer trade and Britannic feeling."[67]

Imperialists were especially encouraged by Joseph Chamberlain's idea of an Imperial *Zollverein*: alternatively an imperial customs union or intra-imperial reciprocity.[68] "Canadians had better turn their attention," G.M. Grant wrote to Willison:

> especially if they want more freedom of trade, to the suggestion of Mr. Chamberlain...it is more consonant with national dignity, self-respect...[and] Imperial unification, than to be knocking forever at the doors of the U.S...If I have any knowledge of the Canadian people...they are eager to see what can be done along the line Mr. C[hamberlain] suggests.[69]

At the same time, Ontario agrarian leaders hoped for "a pretty radical measure of tariff reform,"[70] and Goldwin Smith suggested to Laurier as early as 1892 that "You might...propose to reduce the Canadian duties on British goods[.]"[71] Thus as historian Frank Underhill noted, Laurier reconciled

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[61] WDGP/1/1897, Smith to Gregory, 16 March 1897; JBP/16/84, Smith to Bryce, 4 April 1897.
[62] Dilley, *Finance, Politics, and Imperialism*, p. 133.
[63] LP/C-746/10855-6, Laurier to Charlton (copy), 18 January 1897.
[64] LP/C-749/14320, Charlton to Laurier, 30 April 1897.
[65] O.D. Skelton, "General Economic History, 1867-1912," in *Canada and its Provinces*, IX, p. 206.
[66] LP/C-748/13665, Willison to Laurier, 2 April 1897.
[67] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 157.
[68] LP/C-750/16236-7, Denison to Laurier, 6 September 1897, C-752/18760-3, Denison to Laurier, 9 December 1897; GDP/7-8/3358-60, G.M. Grant to Denison, 1 January 1898; George Denison, "The Present Situation of England," *NC* 42:250 (1897), pp. 1009-18.
[69] WP/17/130, G.M. Grant to Willison, 9 April 1896.
[70] WDGP/1/1897, C.A. Mallory to Goldwin Smith, 17 March 1897.
[71] LP/C-738/2114-5, Smith to Laurier, 25 February 1892.

imperialists and autonomists, as well as free trade farmers and protectionist manufacturers, with "the most brilliant political coup in Canadian history, the invention of the British preference."[72]

II

"On April 25th, 1897," John Willison later wrote, "the new tariff was brought down in Parliament...It gave substantial relief to consumers and producers. It was a bold step in Imperial unity."[73] Although the tariff applied to any country that admitted Canadian goods on equal terms, Britain qualified automatically because of its policy of free trade.[74] The result was a display of imperial sentiment that simultaneously earned Laurier a medal from the Cobden Club in London.[75] The timing was also fortuitous as Canadian exports to Britain grew rapidly, London investors recovered from the Australian and American 'busts,' and Canada's comparatively sound financial system channeled British investment and settlers into the Dominion.[76] The re-colonial 'Laurier boom' thus illustrated the significance of Canada's commercial links within the British world. Yields on Canadian securities floated in London, for example, were lower than those of comparably developed non-British countries - reflecting the "shared vocabulary of Britishness" that attracted British investors to the Dominions.[77]

Prior to the 'Laurier era,' however, Canada's investment reputation was poor. "Notwithstanding the high position which Canada is supposed to hold in the British Empire," noted Adam Shortt, "little interest is taken in the Canadian field for investment by the English financial papers...[and] [t]here is little...in the recent resurrection of British interest in Canadian investments

[72] Underhill, "National Political Parties in Canada," p. 40.
[73] Willison, *Laurier*, II, p. 290.
[74] Brown, *Canada's National Policy*, pp. 278-9.
[75] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 73.
[76] Belich, *Replenishing*, p. 411-16; Andrew Smith, "Continental Divide: The Canadian Banking and Currency Laws of 1871 in the Mirror of the United States," *Enterprise and Society* 13:3 (2012), pp. 455-8.
[77] Dilley, *Finance, Politics, and Imperialism*, p. 110. See also Peter Cain, "Afterword: The Economics of the 'British World,' *JICH* 41:1 (2013), pp. 98-103; Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*, pp. 22-44, 170-83.

to justify our self-congratulations that we have at last lived down [our] past reputation."[78] But given the importance of British investment and credit in London, the preference was a political and promotional coup.[79] Joseph Chamberlain reciprocated the gesture by legally denouncing two European trade treaties that restricted the commercial autonomy of the colonies. This "legitimize[d] the action of Canada," Willison wrote, and entrenched the Dominion's "fiscal freedom."[80] Chamberlain, though, sought to promote Greater British economic integration whereas Laurier reasoned that Westminster was unlikely to abolish free trade. Neither, of course, would Canadian manufacturers accept a free-trade empire.[81] As he wrote to George Denison:

> Let me say at once that though I am a free trader, I would not...refuse a preferential tariff for Canada...But...the battle for preferential tariffs must be fought in Great Britain...Chamberlain's view is: no customs duties within the empire, [and] customs duties against the rest of the world for revenue purposes...Are you prepared to endorse it? I could not, [and] I am satisfied that the great majority of the Canadian people could not."[82]

The British preference, in short, was not intended as a means to political integration but as self-interested policy that at once asserted Britannic nationalism and Dominion autonomy.[83] As Laurier told the Cobden Club: "In Canada we have had the protective system...but the principle is [now] laid down upon which larger measures can proceed...If the British Empire is to be maintained it can only be upon the most absolute freedom, political and commercial."[84] On this ground Laurier opposed Chamberlain's 'neo-mercantilist' vision of imperial tariff reform.[85] Most Ontario liberals, moreover, saw no prospect of freer continental trade and, with the exception of Goldwin Smith,[86]

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[78] Adam Shortt, "Current Events," *QQ* 6:3 (1899), pp. 243-4.
[79] Dilley, *Finance, Politics, and Imperialism*, pp. 113-23.
[80] Willison, *Laurier*, II, pp. 297-8; Luke Trainor, "The British Government and Imperial Economic Unity, 1890-1895," *HJ* 13:1 (1970), pp. 68-84.
[81] Willison, *Laurier*, II, pp. 287-8.
[82] GDP/7-8/3328-30, Laurier to Denison, 24 December 1897.
[83] Dafoe, *Laurier*, pp. 60-64; Skelton, *Laurier*, II, pp. 52-8;
[84] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, pp. 73-4.
[85] For 'neo-mercantilism,' see Peter Cain, "Wealth, Power and Empire: The Protectionist Movement in Britain, 1880-1914," in O'Brien and Clesse, eds., *Two Hegemonies: Britain 1846-1914 and the United States 1941-2001*, pp. 106-7; Howe, *Free Trade*, p. 268.
[86] JBP/16/172, Smith to Bryce, 11 January 1902.

accepted the British preference as the best outcome under the circumstances.[87] The 'Laurier boom' and buoyant Britannic nationalism further diminished the appeal of reciprocity. In Ontario, G.M. Grant believed, the "general prosperity" meant that "it would be better to remain as we are than agree to a[n] [unsatisfactory] bargain."[88] "I do not attach as much importance to reciprocity as I did a few years ago," John Willison similarly admitted. "Still, only a fool would undervalue the importance of better access to the American market."[89]

Though Laurier continued to probe American interest there was no possibility of "a wide measure of reciprocity."[90] "With regard to reciprocity," he wrote to George Denison, "the causes which at one time militated so strongly in favour of it, have largely passed away. We can live [and] prosper without the American market, yet a few well considered concessions...would induce still greater prosperity."[91] But with protectionist Republicans controlling the White House and Congress even this was unlikely. "Let me say at once," Laurier explained to W.D. Gregory, his old free trade ally:

> that my views on...reciprocity have not changed: they are just the same as they ever were. I still believe that trade with the United States is under all circumstances, the most profitable that we could develop, but what would be the use for us of advocating reciprocity simply to have another rebuff[?]...if we are ever to re-open negotiations for a reciprocity treaty, the demand must come from our neighbours[.][92]

III

By 1903, however, Joseph Chamberlain launched his Tariff Reform Campaign and debates increasingly turned to intra-imperial trade. Chamberlain, historian Andrew Thompson writes, "intended to transfer trade...to imperial channels...using fiscal policy to draw together the different

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[87] Adam Shortt, "Preferential Trade Between Britain and Canada," *American Economic Association Publications* 6:2 (1905), p. 81 and Adam Shortt, "Current Events," *QQ* 6:2 (1898), 162-3.
[88] LP/C-763/30789, G.M. Grant to Laurier, 11 January 1899.
[89] LP/C-761/28616-7, Willison to Laurier, 7 December 1898.
[90] LP/C-763/30792, Laurier to G.M. Grant (copy), 27 February 1899; Brown, *Canada's National Policy*, pp. 271-4.
[91] GDP/7-8/3553-4, Laurier to Denison, 4 August 1898.
[92] WDGP/2/1903, Laurier to Gregory, 21 February 1903; LP/C-798/70419-20, Laurier to Gregory (copy), 21 February 1903.

parts of 'Greater Britain.'"[93] While this appealed to Anglo-Canadian imperialists Laurier maintained that the question of a preference for colonial goods in Britain was a subject for Westminster alone to decide.[94] It was essential, he believed, to maintain the Dominions' "fiscal independence."[95] Ontario liberals backed him unreservedly. "[T]here is danger in the colonies endeavoring to force preferential trade on Great Britain," John Willison wrote: "The old Country must itself move first...the colonies want a preference...which the Old Country politicians, with the exception perhaps of Chamberlain, do not seem willing to grant at all...and I am more reluctant than ever to strongly advocate a policy which seems likely to create great antagonism to Canada in Great Britain."[96] Adam Shortt commended this approach. "Canadians who threw themselves so blindly into [tariff reform] as a British national movement," he wrote, "will before long wish they had...left Britain to settle her own fiscal policy."[97] "The United Kingdom and Canada," John Ewart agreed, "are, for commercial purposes, quite separate and distinct."[98]

But on the *desirability* of intra-imperial preferences Willison increasingly diverged from Laurier and other liberal intellectuals. "Of course," he admitted, "if Great Britain would propose such an arrangement [a joint tariff to fund defence] to the Colonial Premiers I, for my part, would not object."[99] This was an early indication of Willison's move towards imperial tariff reform. But it also illustrated the growth of a Toronto-centric liberal imperialism as the city's economic and political power grew rapidly during the 'Laurier boom.' Between 1891 and 1911 Toronto's population more than doubled from about 181,000 to 376,000 with growth accelerating after 1900.[100] Its financial and industrial interests, moreover, benefited from and identified with the National Policy.[101] As the Fabian socialist Beatrice Webb (1858-1943) noted during a 1911 visit to Canada:

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[93] Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, pp. 81-3; Thompson, "Tariff Reform: An Imperial Strategy, pp. 1033-54.
[94] Colvin, "Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the British Preferential Tariff System," pp. 21-2.
[95] WP/24/179, Laurier to Willison, 4 October 1903.
[96] GDP/11-12/4678-9, Willison to Denison, 8 June 1902.
[97] WP/37/285/27332, Shortt to Willison, 8 May 1904.
[98] John Ewart, "Mr. Chamberlain's Proposals and Canada," *MR* 20:60 (1905), p. 5.
[99] GDP/11-12/4679, Willison to Denison, 8 June 1902.
[100] Bothwell, *Ontario*, pp. 98-9.
[101] Dilley, *Finance, Politics, and Imperialism*, pp. 30-31, 114-33.

> [T]his small capitalist class (including corresponding men at Toronto), which has grown rapidly wealthy in the expansion of the past twenty years, is now ruling Canada in all that Canada thinks important - the railroads, the land, the lumber, the mines, the public utilities, and the not inconsiderable manufactures are controlled to an astonishing extent by a comparatively small number of rich men, grouped in...banking and railroad administration.[102]

The 'boom' also extended to western Ontario's provincial cities, including Hamilton, London, Berlin (later Kitchener), Brantford, and Guelph, while stagnation took hold in rural areas and farmers emigrated to the West.[103] And as in Britain, Canadian protectionism and tariff reformism were rooted in the industrial cities.[104] It was there, as Bothwell writes, that the Conservatives broke "the Liberal hold over southwestern Ontario...[and] the change in the character of the province, from rural to urban, from agriculture to industrial, took its toll on 'old' issues."[105] By 1907 Conservative leader Robert Borden included "preferential trade within the Empire" in his 1907 Halifax Platform, and John Willison emerged as Ontario's leading tariff reformer and a key Borden ally.[106]

Most Ontario liberals, however, adhered to free (or freer) trade. Their views were effectively represented by Adam Shortt, the Dominion's authority on economic and monetary questions. Indeed, even Willison admitted that Shortt's analyses "must help greatly to a sane understanding of...the Chamberlain proposals."[107] Specifically, Shortt maintained along with Laurier that Canada's British preference "was the outcome of no...theories as to the advantages of inter-imperial trade...[and] was undertaken entirely in the interests of Canada, and as...the only advisable direction in which to carry out the oft repeated pledges of the Liberal Party" with respect to freer trade. Additionally, he argued, since Canada imported goods primarily from the United States and exported largely to Britain, "[a] country in our position must...retain a perfectly flexible command of its policy and relationships." Fiscal autonomy within the Empire, Shortt concluded, was "in line with the very

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[102] PASSFIELD/1/2/29, 19 July 1911.
[103] Bothwell, *Ontario*, pp. 98-100; Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, p. 86.
[104] O.D. Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 16:3 (1909), p. 296; Willison, *The New Canada*, p. 53.
[105] Bothwell, *Ontario*, pp. 99-100.
[106] LAP/AMEL 2/5/6, Borden to Amery, 26 November 1907.
[107] ASP/1/9, Willison to Shortt, 11 May 1904. See also ASP/1/9, W.L. Grant to Shortt, 15 February 1904.

best traditions of Anglo-Saxon freedom...loyalty towards the mother country...[and] British self-respect[.]"[108]

This analysis appealed to Ontario liberals on two counts. First, they viewed protectionism, as Oscar Skelton put it, as "mean...selfish...[and] in the long run...injurious."[109] Despite protectionist sentiment emanating from Toronto, W.D. Gregory reported to Laurier that "[t]he overwhelming majority of the Liberals of Ontario are...favorable to a revenue tariff."[110] Second, liberal free traders considered Canada a 'British nation' and a part of Greater Britain. "We are in no danger of losing our attachment for Britain," Shortt wrote, "unless it be...from the failure of reckless and misleading promises made by Mr. Chamberlain...nothing can be more destructive of all that is best worth preserving in a common British civilisation[.]"[111] Even liberal imperialists like Arthur Glazebrook and W.L. Grant agreed that "only harm could result"[112] from "Chamberlain's latest fiscal nostrum."[113] This was underlined by John Ewart, who warned in 1905: "A pan-Britannic commercial league against the rest of the world would mean financial and commercial upheaval and disaster...and dissolution of the British Empire at no very distant date."[114]

IV

Liberal intellectuals, then, largely favoured free trade while Toronto's Liberal plutocracy, along with John Willison, defended protectionism and imperial preferences. But the Dominion was also wracked by growing east-west and urban-rural divisions. Indeed, the factors that underpinned Ontario's industrialisation also launched the 'explosive colonisation' of the West. This renewed pressure on Laurier from both the protectionist and low-tariff factions of 'Greater Ontario' liberalism. As W.D. Gregory observed in 1903:

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[108] Shortt, "Preferential Trade," pp. 83, 91-2.
[109] ASP/1/7, Skelton to Shortt, 1 March 1902.
[110] LP/C-820/94934, Gregory to Laurier, 20 February [1904?].
[111] Adam Shortt, *Canada and Chamberlainism* (Ottawa[?]: The Liberal Publication Department, 1905), pp. 5, 8.
[112] ASP/1/9, W.L. Grant to Shortt, 15 February 1904.
[113] ASP/1/8, Glazebrook to Shortt, 21 November 1903.
[114] Ewart, "Mr. Chamberlain's Proposals," p. 9.

> [T]here is a good deal of protectionist sentiment among the Liberals of Toronto, but the protectionists in the party are...a small minority...It may be that if you do not move in that direction you may lose some supporters, but if you do move that way you will surely lose many more and while the former are mostly in places that you stand no chance of carrying, the latter are mostly in places where every vote counts...Why not clear the air...by bringing forward Reciprocity?[115]

In the West, John Dafoe diagnosed the same problem. "[T]here is more protectionist sentiment in Canada than there used to be," he wrote to Clifford Sifton, "but there is still...a great mass of low tariff sentiment in the country that will have to be reckoned with."[116] Gregory, however, harkened back to "the old time enthusiasm...[of] 1891,"[117] while Dafoe argued that the Conservatives' embrace of tariff reform opened the way to a moderate Liberal tariff: "[I]n declaring themselves for protectionism run mad [the Tories] have delivered us out of their hands. The issue to-day is a moderate tariff versus a Dingley tariff, and the Liberals...should be able to consolidate the low tariff men and the moderate protectionists into a working alliance."[118]

This was, in effect, Laurier's position. Aside from establishing an intermediate tariff - allowing for reciprocal trade outside the Empire - his conservative approach to tariff revision, studious cultivation of Canada's credit in London, and support for the Grand Trunk Pacific railway, discussed below in chapter seven, placated Toronto's Liberal plutocracy.[119] At the same time, even Goldwin Smith admitted that Laurier maintained the "platform of free trade,"[120] and opposed the "surrender of...fiscal self government by accession to a *Zollverein*."[121] Laurier's position was further buttressed when the Liberal party returned to power at Westminster in 1906. With protection entrenched in Washington and free trade in London the prospects for both reciprocity and tariff reform appeared remote.

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[115] LP/C-820/94934, Gregory to Laurier, 20 February [1903].
[116] CSP/140/111898/83, Dafoe to Sifton, 28 November 1903.
[117] LP/C-820/94934, Gregory to Laurier, 20 February [1903].
[118] CSP/140/111898/84, Dafoe to Sifton, 28 November 1903.
[119] Shields, "Imperial Policy and Canadian-American Commercial Relations," pp. 126-33.
[120] WDGP/2/1902M-Z, Smith to Gregory, 23 August 1902.
[121] WDGP/2/1903, Smith to Bourassa, 29 August 1903.

Domestically, however, the rise of Western agrarian radicalism and Robert Borden's reconstruction of the Conservative party threatened to undermine Laurier's 'consensus.'[122] Though the Liberals were victorious at the 1904 and 1908 elections, the latter was ominous: despite winning 37 of Ontario's 86 constituencies,[123] for "the first time since 1874, the Liberals failed to gain a majority of [Ontario's] popular vote outside of Toronto."[124] Liberal support in 'Greater Ontario' was increasingly concentrated in the Prairie West and rural 'Old' Ontario. In late-1907 Laurier wrote to John Dafoe, noting that Borden had "sedulously avoided declaring himself on the tariff, in his speeches to the people of Western Canada."[125] By 1910 Dafoe believed that the Liberals had widened their advantage: "there is much more lower tariff sentiment in the West to-day than there was three or four years ago...[the farmers] hope...to get some concessions which appeal to them particularly."[126] But Laurier, who was "a constant reader of the 'Farmer's Sun'" during this period, was keenly aware of agrarian free trade sentiment.[127] In 1910 he toured the Prairies and later received the so-called 'Farmer's Platform' during an enormous protest at Ottawa.[128] Though Frank Underhill argued that Laurier "made the one serious mistake of his career and listened to the cry of the western farmers for American markets,"[129] it was not unreasonable to believe - with the *Nationaliste* surge in Quebec and flagging support in urban Ontario - that gains on the fast-growing Prairies might compensate for losses elsewhere.[130] It was in this context that the debate over reciprocity with the United States re-emerged.

Reciprocity and Britannic Nationalism

I

[122] Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, pp. 144-61; English, *Decline of Politics*.
[123] Bothwell et al., *Canada 1900-1945*, appendix 1.
[124] P.D. Stevens, "Laurier, Aylesworth, and the Decline of the Liberal Party in Ontario," *HP* 3:1 (1968), p. 100.
[125] LP/C-855/132527, Laurier to Dafoe (copy), 4 November 1907
[126] CSP/193/154612/68-9, Dafoe to Sifton, 16 August 1910; LP/C-855/132524, Dafoe to Laurier, 21 November 1907.
[127] LP/C-882/162097, Laurier to Gregory (copy), 23 November 1909.
[128] Dutil and MacKenzie, *Canada 1911*, pp. 81-5.
[129] Underhill, *Canadian Liberalism*, p. 41.
[130] See Creighton, *Canada's First Century*, p. 123.

In early-1911 Liberal Finance Minister W.S. Fielding announced an agreement with American President W.H. Taft to establish free trade in natural products and lower duties on manufactured goods. The Taft-Fielding Agreement ensured that the subsequent 1911 Dominion election was, as John Dafoe wrote, "a square stand-up fight - the first in a generation - between two ideals of national development" - one premised on free trade and the other on protectionism.[131] But the renewed Canadian debate was also part of a wider dispute over tariff reform across the British world.[132] Canada's fight over reciprocity, Robert Borden wrote to Max Aiken (1879-1964), the future Lord Beaverbrook, would shape "the destiny of the Empire."[133]

Indeed, British tariff reformers believed that reciprocity would subvert both imperial integration and Canada's "economic independence." As Leo Amery wrote to W.L.M. King: "I don't suppose for a moment Sir Wilfrid Laurier is deliberately aiming at the breaking up of the Empire...but [reciprocity] must inevitably involve the break-up of the Empire and...the destruction of Canada as an independent nation."[134] "The Canadian fight," Richard Jebb similarly wrote to Alfred Milner, "is the real crisis."[135] However, Canadian protectionists, led by John Willison, opposed British and Canadian interventions in each other's politics.[136] "[A]ny appearance of interference...might be resented by Canadian people...[and] do harm to our cause," Borden admitted to Milner. "Nevertheless we are grateful to know that the importance of the fight...is realized by our friends in the Mother Country."[137] Milner expressed a similar view to Willison:

> We British Imperialists are feeling very anxious just now about Canada. And...don't see what we can do over here to help you in stemming the tide which seems to be running strongly for Continentalism

[131] *MFP*, 22 September 1911.
[132] See for especially Leopold Amery, *The Fundamental Fallacies of Free Trade: Four Addresses on the Logical Groundwork of the Free Trade Theory, 3rd edition* (London: Lond. &c., 1908); Alfred Milner, "Preferential Trade," *Imperial Unity: Speeches Delivered in Canada in the Autumn of 1908* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1909), pp. 59-73; Simon Potter, "The Imperial Significance of the Canadian-American Reciprocity Proposals of 1911," *HJ* 47:1 (2004), pp. 81-100; Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, ch. 4.
[133] LBP/BBK/C/50, Borden to Aitken (copy), 5 April 1911.
[134] WLMKP/C-1914/14802,11, Amery to King, 12 June 1911.
[135] AMP/37/232, 236, Jebb to Milner, 26 July 1911 (emphasis in original).
[136] See for example RJP/ICS/116/A/1-6 January 1910, Willison to Jebb, 1 January 1910.
[137] AMP/37/201, Borden to Milner, 13 May 1911.

> and against Imperial Union...beyond, of course, keeping up the fight for Tariff Reform...Canadians, and Canadians alone...can keep their country on lines making for the Imperial ideal.[138]

The Canadian debate also engaged British Liberals, though historian Simon Potter notes that political cooperation between free traders did not match their opponents.[139] Richard Jebb's fear that the "support of the [British] Liberal Government and party is being given to their compatriots in Canada, [while] nothing whatever is being done on our side," was distinctly overblown.[140] Yet such cooperation as was achieved illustrated the appeal amongst British Liberals of a free trading, 'Gladstonian' Greater Britain and the hope that the United States would abandon protectionism.[141] In fact, James Bryce (1838-1922), the British Ambassador at Washington, and Canadian Governor-General Lord Grey (1851-1917) were among Laurier's most notable British liberal supporters over reciprocity. Bryce, the *de facto* Canadian Ambassador and a critic of the "monstrous" American tariff, facilitated Canadian-American negotiations.[142] And though Grey's position required him to "keep very silent on the subject," he privately defended Laurier. "I think you are making a mistake in anticipating so much mischief from the Reciprocity arrangement," he wrote to Leo Amery. It would "combine the commercial advantages of selling in the American market with the political advantages of British citizenship."[143] In general, free traders, as Colonial Secretary Lewis Harcourt (1863-1922) wrote to Bryce, felt "sure that [reciprocity] will greatly contribute to...amity between [Great Britain] and America, and...to the prosperity of Canada."[144] Such views encouraged Canadian free traders. "The unexpected vitality of free trade in Britain," wrote Oscar Skelton, "in spite of the able and insidious attack, has heartened Canadian sympathizers; the repeated victories of the free trade

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[138] WP/29/223/21859-61, Milner to Willison, 8 May 1910; AMP/37/5, Milner to Willison (copy), 8 May 1910.
[139] Potter, "Canadian-American Reciprocity Proposals of 1911," p. 98.
[140] AMP/37/237, Jebb to Milner, 29 July 1911 (emphasis in original).
[141] Rogers, "Land and Tariffs," pp. 147-60.
[142] JBP/17/204, Bryce to Smith (copy), 16 February 1908. See also LP/C-888/168778-81, Bryce to Laurier, 25 March 1910.
[143] LAP/AMEL/2/5/10, Grey to Amery, 6 June 1911.
[144] JBP/USA 31/120, Harcourt to Bryce, 11 March 1911.

forces by relatively small margins had more moral effect than the former unquestioned acquiescence of both British parties in the Cobdenite tradition."[145]

II

Anglo-Canadian views of reciprocity, however, did not neatly align with the imperialist-autonomist divide. As in Britain there were, in Grey's phrase, "free traders who are Imperialists at heart[.]"[146] Among these were leading Ontario Round Tablers who doubted the efficacy of preferential tariffs. Edward Kylie, for instance, welcomed "trade between Canada and other countries and the consequent reduction in Canadian tariffs,"[147] while W.L. Grant wrote to Arthur Glazebrook:

> [I]f the ROUND TABLE is to promote an Imperialism chiefly made up of hi[g]h Protection...I for one have no use either for it or for its brand of Imperialism...you will not misunderstand me, and look on me as a Manchester Radical...[but] if sometimes I fall over into what seems to you the wrong side...it will be in my desire to counterbalance [tariff reform].[148]

Glazebrook, though, similarly reported to his friend Alfred Milner that, "Although I [would] rather see Tariff Reform than a dismembered Empire, I have been advocating Reciprocity with the U.S.A. all along...because generally speaking I am a Free Trader."[149]

Divisions amongst Canadian liberals mirrored those in Britain. George Wrong and John Willison were a case in point. Willison's views approximated the Chamberlainite defection from Gladstonian liberalism. Free trade, he now believed, was responsible for the decline of British manufacturing and he hoped to see "a tariff...for England as Canada and Australia have made their tariffs - [with] a preference in favor of the over-sea Dominions."[150] Willison, however, distinguished between protectionism to defend domestic industries and imperial preferences, which he valued solely as a means to imperial integration:

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[145] Skelton, "Reciprocity," pp. 89-90.
[146] LAP/AMEL/2/5/6, Grey to Amery, 3 April 1907; BWP/9/September 1910-11/41, Curtis to Walker, 12 July 1911.
[147] Kylie, "Liberalism and Empire, p. 75.
[148] WLGP/4, Grant to Glazebrook (copy), 17 December 1910.
[149] AMP/132/19, Memo, [Glazebrook] to Milner, n.d., [1910 or 1911].
[150] WP/53/39382-4, untitled speech notes, n.d.

> [O]ur preference of 33 1/3% in favor of British goods is sentimental. If only Canadian considerations were involved we would not continue the system for twelve months...our whole preferential system is rooted in a simple desire to give a preference to British goods and to promote Imperial consolidation...I advocate the preference for Imperial rather than for Canadian reasons.[151]

Without tariff reform, Willison added, "commercial continentalism...must become steadily more acceptable to Canadians." "To be frank," he wrote to Philip Kerr, "I have a good deal of sympathy with my fellow-Canadians who insist that if Britain will adhere to free trade there is no reason why we should continue to give a preference [to British goods]."[152]

Wrong, conversely, aligned with British Liberal imperialists who opposed protectionism in general and imperial preferences in particular.[153] On the former, he wrote to Willison, "I cannot shake off my early training in the principles of Free Trade so as to agree entirely with you."[154] He therefore rejected the latter: "I have never believed much in...a Preferential Tariff...[and] I do not believe that the Canadian Preferential Tariff has done much to further any deep kind of [Imperial] union; this will come through common sacrifices, in face of common dangers."[155] Wrong reiterated this view when British tariff reformers attacked Laurier over reciprocity. "We shall never achieve any real progress in our work," he too wrote to Philip Kerr, "until we get these fiscal questions out of the way as not relating to the fundamentals of Imperial Union. This union will not be economic but protective in the non-fiscal sense[.]"[156] In 1911 Wrong voted for reciprocity.[157]

The ideological coalition in favour of reciprocity - despite opposition from Toronto's Liberal plutocracy and Conservative Montréal intellectuals[158] - thus included a surprising number of imperialists. Indeed, by 1911 Canada's Britannic nationalism was so marked that even George Parkin admitted to "feeling...that reciprocity would greatly increase Canadian prosperity, as a consequence

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[151] RBP/C-4199/482-4, Willison to F.S. Oliver (copy), 15 December 1911; Willison, *The New Canada*, p. 10.
[152] AMP/36/256-9, Willison to Kerr (copy), n.d. [1910], enclosed in Kerr to Milner, 30 April 1910.
[153] Matthew, *Liberal Imperialists*, pp. 100-102, 164-8.
[154] WP/50/344/36337-8, Wrong to Willison, 24 June 1910.
[155] RTP/822/106, Wrong to Kerr, 29 January 1911.
[156] RTP/822/129, Wrong to Kerr, 7 June 1911.
[157] GWP/B2003/005/001, Wrong to Borden (copy), 26 September 1911.
[158] See for example, Andrew MacPhail, "Protection and Politics," *UM* 7 (1908), pp. 238-55, and "Why the Liberals Failed," *UM* 10 (1911), pp. 566-80.

drawing more population, and so make Canada more than ever a strength of the Empire."[159] The pro-reciprocity coalition, as Oscar Skelton noted, was comprised of "imperialists who fear tariff mongering will make for friction rather than for harmony, nationalists who oppose centralisation in any form, and free or freer traders who look to the mother country as their model."[160] This agreement was premised on two ideas. The first was the Dominion's economic sovereignty within the Empire. As John Ewart explained:

> [W]e make our own tariffs...we tax British, and other goods as we please...[and] the British parliament has [no] right whatever to interfere...Until the middle if the last century...[o]ur trade was a British monopoly...[but] [t]he advent of free-trade in the United Kingdom ended the prohibitions, and...Canada is to-day...fiscally independent.[161]

Of course, in practice the Dominion was highly dependent on British markets and investment, but the sole right to conduct and legislate commercial policy resided at Ottawa. Second was the conviction that support for reciprocity was not 'un-British.' "Imperial sentiment is in no...danger from reciprocity," Oscar Skelton argued, though it "drives another nail in the coffin of imperial preference, that hopeless dream...that salvation could come to Britain by abandoning free trade...and that all the scattered states of the Empire with their diverse economic interests...could be linked in an inclusive and exclusive fiscal alliance[.]"[162] Henri Bourassa, contributing to a primarily Anglo-Canadian debate, was even clearer:

> Canada implicitly preserves the liberty to...proffer to any country, British or foreign, advantages similar to those now granted to the United States. So, in principle, Canadian autonomy and British interests are safeguarded. And this is amply sufficient in the opinion of all those who look upon freedom of action for the sel[f]-governing communities...as the strongest Imperial bond. But, if, by '*British interests*', one means, the subordination of purely Canadian interests to the combined interests of the Empire, then...[reciprocity] is certainly the most treacherous and effective blow which Sir Wilfrid Laurier has ever given to the cause of Imperialism[.][163]

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[159] GWP/B2003/005/004, Parkin to Wrong, 15 February 1911.
[160] O.D. Skelton, "The Canadian Reciprocity Agreement," *The Economic Journal* 21:82 (1911), p. 281.
[161] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, I, pp. 3-4.
[162] Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 18:4 (1911), p. 334.
[163] Henri Bourassa, *The Reciprocity Agreement and its Consequences as viewed from the Nationalist Standpoint* (Montreal: Le Devoir, 1911), p. 23.

Bourassa thus identified the central point of contention - not 'Britishness,' but the neo-mercantilist ideology behind imperial tariff reform and the National Policy. Whereas tariff reformers sought to "force, through an artificial agency, the consummation of that partnership which the laws of nature, as well as true British traditions and interests, have heretofore prevented," free traders were content that from Dominion autonomy "shall arise the greatness of Canada and the maintenance...of the bond which unites Canada to Britain."[164]

III

Superficially, then, 1911 was a replay of 1891 as free traders and protectionists debated the impact of reciprocity on Dominion nation-building and the British 'connection.' By 1911, however, the 'Laurier boom,' the growth of Britannic nationalism, and the demise of annexationism had fundamentally changed the political context. The American-initiated agreement, moreover, was for 'Limited Reciprocity' - manufacturers would remain largely protected while tariff reductions targeted the agricultural sector.[165] Laurier's opponents were stunned and demoralised, knowing that even John Macdonald had sought "reciprocity in natural products."[166]

But opposition soon congealed in Ontario's urban industrial centres, which by 1911 were embedded in an east-west commercial system and the wider British world economy. The Dominion was finally booming and prosperity undercut the appeal of American markets. "For half a century," John Willison wrote, Canada was "forced by [the] exclusive and hostile fiscal policy of the United States...to create our own fiscal system, [and] to develop our own systems of transportation...[But with reciprocity] all our...material prosperity, all our glowing national outlook...are threatened with immense loss and disturbance."[167] Willison's intellectual transition paralleled Ontario's economic development, and by 1911 he had evolved from a staunch Grit free trader into Toronto's "most

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[164] Bourassa, *The Reciprocity Agreement*, pp. 25, 30; Skelton, "Reciprocity: The Canadian Attitude," p. 82.
[165] Bothwell, *Your Country, My Country*, pp. 148-51.
[166] Willison, *Laurier*, II, p. 157; Robert Laird Borden, *His Memoirs: Volume I* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1969 [1938]), p. 142; Clippingdale, *Willison*, pp. 259-60
[167] WP/53/39727-8, 30, untitled speech notes, n.d. [January - March 1911].

vehement opponent of reciprocity[.]"[168] This "uncompromising and unequivocal" position reflected his association with Toronto's Liberal 'plutocracy' and he played a central role in organising Liberal anti-free trade sentiment.[169] This faction, he recorded, sought "to resist...the Reciprocity Agreement...to influence opinion in the country, to accomplish the defeat of the Government...arrange a basis of co-operation with Mr. Borden...[and] preserve and strengthen Canadian nationality and the connection with the Mother Country."[170]

This was not, though, a solely Toronto or imperialist movement. Most notably Willison was joined by Clifford Sifton, who forewarned John Dafoe of his "uncompromising stand against the agreement."[171] While Dafoe advised him not to attack "reciprocity outright" for fear of the reaction in the West,[172] Sifton asserted that there was "absolutely no future for any policy in Canada except that of moderate protection."[173] Reciprocity, he claimed, was "commercially of no advantage and from a national standpoint, disastrous in the extreme...[with] a most prejudicial effect upon our progress toward a strong, independent and influential position in the British Empire[.]"[174] Though Sifton regretted "breaking off...political relations with friends of a lifetime," he was never an ideologically committed free trader.[175] Nonetheless, Laurier lamented that "reciprocity is certainly in the traditions of the party and I cannot understand why our friend Sifton should go back upon...the convictions of his life."[176] But the defection of the so-called 'Toronto Eighteen' - the Liberal 'plutocrats,' including B.E. Walker, who allied with Willison and Sifton - was far more damaging.[177] As George Wrong noted, they "put up large sums...[and] [a]rguments against Reciprocity were inserted

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[168] JBP/155/148, Wrong to Bryce, 22 May 1912; GWP/B2003/005/001, Wrong to Bryce (copy), 22 May 1912.
[169] BWP/32/1, "Reciprocity: Address delivered to the Women's Canadian Club, Toronto, by Mr. J.S. Willison, 7 March 1911 (copy)."
[170] WP/52/38488-9, untitled memo, n.d. [1911?].
[171] JDP/M-73, Sifton to Dafoe, 24 February 1911; BWP/9/22, Willison to Walker, re: meeting with Sifton, 6 February 1911.
[172] Ibid., Dafoe to Sifton (copy), 1 April 1910.
[173] Ibid., Sifton to Dafoe, 26 September 1911.
[174] Ibid., Sifton to the Liberal Association...of Brandon [Manitoba], 26 July 1911.
[175] LP/C-900/181847, Sifton to Laurier, 20 February 1911.
[176] JDP/M-73, Laurier to Dafoe, 24 February 1911; LP/C-900/181848, Laurier to Sifton (copy), 21 February 1911.
[177] BWP/32/1, "Eighteen Liberals, The seceded re: Reciprocity[,] Feb.19, 1911,"21/46, Walker to Sifton (copy), 18 February 1911, 21/63, Walker to the *Globe*, 20 September 1911..

in Liberal papers all over the country[.]"[178] While Walker in particular denied contributing "to the funds of the Conservative party...or...subsidizing or influencing in any manner any journal in Canada,"[179] he plainly gave at least "$1,000 in connection with the anti-reciprocity campaign."[180] Free traders derided the 'plutocrats' as self-interested and duplicitous. "The very men who financed the magnificently conducted [anti-reciprocity] campaign," W.L. Grant protested, "are the very men who have the largest business dealings with the United States...It is difficult to see why Sir Edmund Walker...becomes the heaven-born saviour of his country by selling in the New York market...while the Canadian farmer...inevitably drifts towards a belief in annexation."[181]

The resulting propaganda, aided by tactless comments by American politicians, whipped up Britannic nationalism against apparent American expansionism.[182] But with a booming economy even tariff reformers admitted that annexation was a latent rather than an imminent threat.[183] Their real concern was that free trade was "a blow at Canadian national unity, and at Imperial unity."[184] "Reciprocity," Willison argued:

> would destroy the national policy of Protection...[and] any serious diversion of traffic from the trade routes running east and west...would prejudice great investments and measurably impair the commercial unity of the Confederation...As to these ultimate effects there will be differences of opinion...and far more serious differences of opinion if we enter upon national and Imperial considerations.[185]

This view of Dominion nation-building was, not surprisingly, shared by Sifton and the 'Toronto Eighteen.' As John Darwin writes: "The Toronto plutocracy was bound to fear that freeing the West to trade south rather than east would endanger the new rail links being built from Toronto to the West...[and] it was no coincidence that the Liberal defectors included those most ardently

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[178] GWP/B2004-0010/005/03, Wrong to Murray Wrong, 31 December 1911 (copy); JBP/USA/31/204-5, Grey to Bryce, 1 June 1911; GPP/31-6/1911/9666, Wrong to Parkin, 12 October 1911.
[179] WLGP/10/T-Z, Walker to Grant, 13 November 1911.
[180] BWP/21/54, Walker to Lash, 26 April 1911.
[181] W.L. Grant, "Current Events," *QQ* 19:2 (1911), p. 171.
[182] JBP/USA/32/190, Laurier to Bryce, 4 September 1911; RJP/ICS/A/1911 (May-June), "Address of President Taft at the Banquet of the Associated Press and American Newspaper Publishers' Association, at the Hotel Waldorf, New York City, April 27, 1911 (copy)"; Bothwell, *Your Country, My Country*, pp. 150-51.
[183] RBP/C-4199/484-5, Willison to F.S. Oliver (copy), 15 December 1911; LAP/AMEL 2/5/10, Amery to Willison (copy), 19 June 1911; WLMKP/C-1914/14799-801, Amery to King, 12 June 1911.
[184] WP/53/39741, untitled speech notes, 1911[?]; *TN*, 27 January 1911.
[185] Willison, *The New Canada*, pp. 8, 10.

committed to the union of Ontario and the West as the heartland of British Canada[.]"[186] The Dominion, Willison concluded, could not "be of the commercial empire of the United States and of the political empire of Great Britain." Laurier's policy was "national suicide."[187]

IV

Free traders expected and discounted such attacks. Ontario farmers, W.D. Gregory initially reported, "are unanimous...for the agreement...Outside the manufacturing centres the people cannot be stirred up against [it]."[188] "I am not surprised at the opposition which is offered to our policy," Wilfrid Laurier responded, "We have been very familiar with it all through our life."[189] Oscar Skelton, however, was more cautious: "Probably a majority...are in favor of closer trade relations, but there is little demand for a sweeping measure of reciprocity, and few believe it of the vital importance it was held in the early [eighteen] nineties."[190]

Yet equally unlike 1891, Skelton argued, the "gradual movement toward freer trade does not necessarily mean...closer trade relations mainly with the United States."[191] On the contrary, one benefit of reciprocity was that "the United States recognised that the preference granted [to] Great Britain and other parts of the Empire did not constitute a discrimination."[192] This was important as it left open the possibility to further liberalise British world trade.[193] Of course, the American market remained "with the possible exception of Britain, the one...[of] most...importance [to Canada], with its ninety millions of prosperous, English-speaking customers at our very doors."[194] Nonetheless, Skelton - who emerged in 1911 as a leading proponent of freer trade - maintained that Canada's new "national self-confidence" entailed wider commercial interests:

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[186] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 158.
[187] WP/53/39741-4, untitled speech notes, 1911[?].
[188] LP/C-900/181771, Gregory to Laurier, 18 February 1911.
[189] LP/C-900/181772, Laurier to Gregory (copy), 20 February 1911.
[190] Skelton, "Reciprocity: The Canadian Attitude," p. 77.
[191] Ibid., pp. 80, 96-7.
[192] Skelton, "The Canadian Reciprocity Agreement," p. 276.
[193] See for example LP/C-896/177228-9, Cartwright to Laurier, 22 November 1910, C-904/186306, Jebb to Laurier, 19 May 1911.
[194] Oscar Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 18:4 (1911), p. 330.

> we have been looking west to Vancouver [and] north to Hudson Bay...Meantime our own commercial expansion has been multiplying the points at which we come into contact with other powers, making the whole world our neighbour...The days are gone when Britain and the United States bounded our whole political and commercial horizon.[195]

At the time same, free traders had to answer the charges that reciprocity entailed the creation of "a vast cleavage of interests across the continent."[196] They simply retorted that this was already true under protection. Indeed, as discussed above, urbanised and industrialised southern Ontario already imposed an unwanted economic system upon its agrarian hinterland. As George Wrong reported: "in Toronto the talk is chiefly of a...Conservative victory," though Ontario's "rural districts...are out for Reciprocity."[197] Moreover, while opposition coalesced in urban Ontario John Dafoe assured Wilfrid Laurier that the agreement had "changed the whole political situation in the West" in the Liberals' favour.[198] Protectionism thus sharply divided the Dominion along east-west and rural-urban lines, but it was the 'Greater Ontario' cleavage that was most concerning. As Skelton wrote, the "the only way to develop annexation sentiment in Canada is to refuse to ratify reciprocity, and let the west come to believe that it has been sacrificed for Imperial loyalty or eastern manufacturers' gain."[199] W.L.M. King wrote in the same terms. Reciprocity, he argued

> meant wider markets to our ever increasing agricultural products of the West...without injuring so far as I can see a single interest in the country. The danger of...annexation...I have never been able to entertain seriously, whilst I have always forseen [sic], a very grave danger...of Eastern and Western Canada coming to believe that their interests are antagonistic.[200]

Yet even as the "farmers' movement...put the protectionist forces on the defensive," there were political dangers in meeting their demands.[201] When Laurier revealed the reciprocity agreement, King recorded: "I spoke out strongly about the danger to Ont[ario] of interfering much with [manufacturers]...[and] that there was danger in many cities...I question if we will satisfy the

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[195] ODSP/9, Articles, drafts, and fragments, 1 of 2, n.d.
[196] GWP/B2003/005/004, Parkin to Wrong, 22 March 1911.
[197] GPP/31-6, Wrong to Parkin, 31 August 1911.
[198] LP/C-903/185183, Dafoe to Laurier, 28 April 1911; Skelton, "Reciprocity: The Canadian Attitude," p. 92; Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 357.
[199] Skelton, "The Canadian Reciprocity Agreement," pp. 279, 281; W.L. Grant, "Current Events," *QQ* 19:2 (1911), p. 171.
[200] LAP/AMEL 2/5/10, King to Amery, 6 November 1911.
[201] Skelton, "Reciprocity: The Canadian Attitude," p. 96.

farmers [and] may prejudice other interests to the extent of suffering defeat at their hands."[202] King's analysis was prescient. "The manufacturers were organized and persistent," Oscar Skelton later admitted, and "[t]he cities were growing faster than the country, making the weight of protectionist, city-concentrating sentiment cumulative."[203] On 21 September 1911 the Laurier Government was swept from power after fifteen years, largely on Ontario's swing to Robert Borden's Conservatives. "[T]he well-proved National Policy," John Willison celebrated, "is to be maintained...Imperial trade is to be fostered...the nation's political independence is not to be risked, and...the electorate has declared emphatically against continentalism and for the Empire."[204]

V

At the 1911 election the Liberals won only 13 of Ontario's 86 constituencies, though the result was closer than it appeared since the first-past-the-post electoral system amplified anti-reciprocity sentiment.[205] Indeed, only two months prior to the vote Laurier noted that "the information which comes to me is most encouraging."[206] And he had reason to trust his sources. The Liberals had been certain of success on the Prairies, while W.D. Gregory was closely in touch with agrarian opinion in western Ontario. "[T]he feeling throughout the country," he reported to Laurier, "is crystalizing or has crystalized [sic] in favor of Reciprocity."[207] One doubtful comment, however, was illuminating: "There is still in some quarters, which are usually not unfriendly to us, some misapprehension. You find men here and there...who have some misgivings about the agreement."[208] His old friend John Willison similarly assessed the situation: "All depends on the attitude of the Conservative farmer...Generally the party quarrel has been keen and bitter in our rural constituencies...Undoubtedly the Conservatives will gain in the towns and cities and, therefore, if

[202] WLMK/diary, 18 January 1911.
[203] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 357.
[204] *TN*, 25 September 1911.
[205] Dutil and MacKenzie, *Canada 1911*, pp. 251-3.
[206] LP/C-906/188118, Laurier to Gregory (copy), 29 July 1911.
[207] LP/C-905/186889, Gregory to Laurier, 9 June 1911.
[208] LP/C-906/188116, Gregory to Laurier, 26 July 1911.

Conservative farmers hold steady the Government may not survive."[209] Willison was vindicated by the result. While the Liberals dominated Alberta and Saskatchewan they lost 26 constituencies in Ontario by less than five-percent of the vote, the majority in the increasingly urban and industrial districts west of Toronto.[210] As Laurier observed: "Our losses elsewhere...would simply have reduced our majority, but Ontario went solid against us."[211]

In contrast to 1891, the 1911 campaign in Ontario was characterised by a well-financed and politically influential anti-reciprocity campaign; Liberal organisational disarray; booming prosperity; and a confident Britannic nationalism - all of which contributed to the defeat of freer trade.[212] The "people did not rally to [reciprocity] as they would have done years ago," Laurier admitted, "for the reason that the country is so prosperous[.]"[213] Nonetheless, even after the defeat he upheld reciprocity on ideological and political grounds, defending its "sound principles"[214] and rebuffing pressure from urban Ontario "to drop reciprocity," noting the need to sustain "the courage of our friends in the West."[215] Free trade, moreover, remained stubbornly popular among liberal intellectuals. George Wrong, for example, wanted "a 50% preference to Britain and freer trade all round to be the Liberal policy."[216] As Oscar Skelton observed in 1914, "the situation both in Canada and abroad, and the fresh drawing of lines at the time of the reciprocity struggle, have revived in a measure Liberal zeal for freer trade."[217]

Such pronouncements demonstrate the limitations of historical accounts that emphasise the supposed Liberal abandonment of free trade after 1896 and its opportunistic rediscovery in 1911.[218] Moreover, it is clear that while free traders sought to entrench Canada's 'commercial autonomy'[219]

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[209] LAP/AMEL 2/5/11, Willison to Amery, 11 August 1911.
[210] Dutil and MacKenzie, *Canada 1911*, pp. 266-71, appendix 1 and 2.
[211] Quoted in Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 382; Stevens, "Decline of the Liberal Party in Ontario," pp. 108-13.
[212] JBP/155/140-5, Wrong to Bryce, 31 December 1911.
[213] WDGP/3/1911, Laurier to Gregory, 30 September 1911.
[214] JDP/M-73, Laurier to Dafoe, 27 September 1911.
[215] Ibid., 6 November 1912; GWP/B2004/0010/005, Wrong to Murray Wrong (copy), 9 February [?] 1913.
[216] GWP/B2004/0010/005, Wrong to Murray Wrong (copy), 9 February [?] 1913.
[217] Oscar Skelton, "Canada and the American Tariff," *University Magazine* 13 (1914), pp. 45-6.
[218] See for example Creighton, *Canada's First Century*, pp. 85-6, 123-5; Underhill, *Canadian Liberalism*, p. 18, 40-2.
[219] R.A. Shields, "Imperial Policy and Canadian-American Reciprocity," 1909-1911," *JICH* 5:2 (1977), pp. 151-71.

this represented a confident assertion of Britannic nationalism.[220] Oscar Skelton lamented to W.L.M. King: "It's a pity we in Ontario haven't yet got to the stage where our loyalty and independence can be taken for granted; apparently it must be demonstrated...by the sacrifice of undoubted economic advantage."[221] Ontario liberal intellectuals thus largely shared Wilfrid Laurier's view that reciprocity was a "policy of sound Canadianism which makes for the greatness of our country and of the Empire."[222]

Conclusion

Canada, as historian Frank Underhill wrote, "early repudiated the philosophy of the Manchester School."[223] When the banner of free trade - the central creed of British liberalism - was raised in 'British America' it was usually in connection with agrarian radicalism and failed to gained critical mass. Historians, moreover, have tended see Liberal proposals for freer continental trade as politically opportunistic and indifferent, if not hostile, to the British connection. This chapter, however, sought to overturn those perceptions by advancing two main points. First, that Wilfrid Laurier remained committed to free trade throughout the 'Laurier era.' Though political changes forced him to advance along lines of least resistance, his consistent aim was the liberalisation of Canadian trade in general and with Britain and the United States in particular. "Alas!" he lamented after the defeat of reciprocity in 1911: "How little I have accomplished even for the object which certainly was nearest to my heart!"[224]

Second, but equally important, Laurier and free trade liberals - though opposed to imperial tariff reform - nonetheless envisaged Canada as part of a 'Greater Britain.' When liberal autonomists and free trade imperialists aligned to support reciprocity they did so, in part, because they believed that tariff reform threatened to drive Britain and the Dominions apart. They thus defended Canada's

[220] See for example GPP/31-6, Wrong to Parkin, 12 October 1911; W.L. Grant, "Current Events," *QQ* 19:2 (1911), p. 171.
[221] WLMKP/C-1916/16965-6, Skelton to King, 24 September 1911.
[222] Quoted in Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 380.
[223] Underhill, "Some Reflections on the Liberal Tradition," p. 8.
[224] JEP/1/95-6, Laurier to Ewart, 7 October 1911.

distinct economic interests, espoused Britannic nationalism, and encouraged freer and more extensive Anglo-world trade. As we shall see in the next chapter, similar arguments were deployed in debates over the Dominion's international relations. But the opportunity to expand free trade with the Republic was lost. As Laurier regretfully recalled: "My defeat in 1911 never caused me a single pang of personal upset, but was not a great mistake made[?]"[225]

[225] WP/24/179/18109-16, Laurier to Willison, 16 April 1915.

6

Anglo-World Order

"[Canada], too, came to develop an international sense, and to realize...the importance of Anglo-American friendship for the peace of the world."[1]
- O.D. Skelton, 1914

The British North America Act (1867), as historian C.P. Stacey noted, "did nothing...to define the status of the new [Dominion] in the British Empire...[and] likewise had nothing to say about the conduct of foreign relations."[2] Though Canadians sought to establish a British-American nation to "stand by England...in peace or in war,"[3] their expectations, at least initially, went largely unrealised. The Dominion wielded little power in North America and its colonial position remained essentially unchanged. As John Willison recalled: "[T]he attitude of Washington towards Canada was frigid, if not unfriendly,"[4] and Canadian politicians "argued chiefly against any assumption of obligation...for the general defence of the empire."[5]

During the 'Laurier era,' however, an emerging Anglo-American entente opened new opportunities for Canadians in imperial and international - or 'external' - affairs. Meanwhile, the expansion of colonial autonomy revealed the inadequacies of Westminster's constitutional monopoly over foreign policy. Indeed, the growth of Britannic nationalism, as John Darwin argues, was premised on the notion that the Dominions were "'British nations,' partners, not subjects, of imperial Britain."[6] This necessarily entailed responsibility for foreign relations, and for Canadians there was perhaps no more significant international objective than improved relations with the United States. But Canadian-American relations had to be pursued in a manner consistent with the maintenance of Canada's British 'connection' - a dilemma usually explained by historians of Canadian

[1] Skelton, "General Economic History of the Dominion," p. 216.
[2] Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, I, pp. 1, 3.
[3] John A. Macdonald, "Debating Confederation, 1865: House of Assembly, Quebec City, February 6," in Sarah Katherine Gibson and Arthur Milnes (eds.), *Canada Transformed: The Speeches of Sir John A. Macdonald* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2014), p. 201.
[4] WP/51/2/37634, undated speech [1909-10?].
[5] WP/51/2/37908, undated speech [1914-18?].
[6] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 148.

foreign policy in the context of a 'North Atlantic Triangle' encompassing Ottawa, London, and Washington.[7]

There are, though, two notable limitations to this concept: first, its apparent disinterest in the 'Pacific world' in general and the Antipodean Dominions in particular; second, its role in buttressing a Nationalist interpretation of the development of an 'un-British' foreign policy.[8] This chapter charts a different course, arguing that Ontario liberals saw Canada's geopolitical interests in 'British-American' terms and sought to assert its distinct perspective in imperial and international relations. These views evolved in parallel with Canada's development and had important consequences for Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal 'consensus.' Whereas liberals were initially content with the formula of 'autonomy within the Empire,' Britannic nationalism fuelled two competing views of Canada's future in international politics: 'Britannic Alliance' and Imperial union. These visions, however, prescribed different means to the same end - the advancement of the Dominion's geopolitical interests as an integral part of 'Greater Britain.' The chapter proceeds in three parts. First, it outlines how the Anglo-American 'rapprochement' of the late-nineteenth-century altered perceptions of Canada's strategic context and facilitated the growth and assertion of Britannic nationalism. It then turns to liberal views of Canada's involvement in the South African War. Finally, it connects these earlier debates to the question of 'Imperial defence,' illuminating how competing visions of Greater Britain shaped liberal disputes over Canada's future in international politics.

Anglo-Saxonism and Britannic Nationalism

I

During the American Civil War intra-Anglo relations sharply deteriorated. British aristocratic and textile interests agitated for the Confederacy, and a series of diplomatic crises erupted between

[7] See especially John Brebner, *The North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946); B.J.C. McKercher and Lawrence Aronson (eds.), *The North Atlantic Triangle in a Changing World: Anglo-American-Canadian Relations, 1902-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

[8] For example David Mackenzie, "Canada, the North Atlantic Triangle, and the Empire," *OHBE*, IV, ch. 25.

Britain and the Northern States over perceived violations of British neutrality in their relations with the South.[9] In the Province of Canada, meanwhile, George Brown was among the few British-Americans who, as Anglo-American relations soured, consistently defended the North.[10] As Wilfrid Laurier recalled in his first speech as Liberal leader, "Among the [Canadian] public men of the time there was only one...who openly proclaimed his sympathies for the cause of liberty for which the Northern States were fighting...That man was [the] Honorable George Brown."[11]

British and Canadian relations with the reunified United States were consequently poor. Washington's denunciation of the North American Reciprocity Treaty in 1866, Laurier maintained, was a retaliatory measure against the Empire,[12] while acquiescence to Fenian raids on Canadian border towns (1866-70) further demonstrated American resentment.[13] But the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1) and the rise of the German Empire encouraged British conciliation of the United States. The 1871 Treaty of Washington was thus a "watershed of Anglo-American and Canadian-American relations," settling disputes and institutionalising legal arbitration.[14] The inclusion of John Macdonald as a British negotiator, moreover, recognised the new Dominion's stake in the outcome.[15] In geopolitical terms, though, W.E. Gladstone conceded American hegemony in North America. Reconciliation with the Republic dovetailed with imperial 'retrenchment' and colonial autonomy, and Gladstone quickly withdrew the British Army from Canada - retaining only the Royal Navy's installations at Halifax and Esquimalt.[16] Even so, the Dominion gained neither substantive influence over British policy nor bilateral relations with the United States, and Canadian politicians quickly discovered that Anglo-American relations took precedence over their concerns.[17] Yet as Stacey

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[9] Jay Sexton, *Debtor Diplomacy: Finance and American Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era, 1937-1873* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 95- 113.
[10] Careless, *Brown*, II, p. 53.
[11] Laurier, "Speech at Somerset, 1887," p. 384.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Hereward Senior, *The Last Invasion of Canada: The Fenian Raids, 1866-70* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1991).
[14] Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, I, p. 13.
[15] Ibid., pp. 19-24.
[16] See especially Donald Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense, 1870-1914* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), ch. 2.
[17] Barbara Messamore, "Diplomacy or duplicity? Lord Lisgar, John A. Macdonald, and the Treaty of Washington, 1871," *JICH* 32:2 (2004), pp. 29-53.

rightly notes, Canada had no greater international interest than "the restoration of good relations, and the maintenance of peace, between the United States and Britain."[18] The Treaty of Washington was a significant step in that direction.

Nonetheless, Anglo-American relations remained tepid even as Britain partially 'recolonised' the booming post-war United States and transatlantic economic and cultural links tightened.[19] In Canada, fears over 'Manifest Destiny' lingered and there was a festering sense of resentment towards British diplomacy.[20] As Wilfrid Laurier told the House of Commons in 1892:

> Is there a Canadian anywhere who would not hail with joy the day when we would be deprived of the services of British diplomacy[?]...British diplomacy, so far as Canada is concerned, has been a record of failure, and of surrender and sacrifice...I would rather have a Canadian Tory than an English Liberal, for the negotiation of a treaty...in the interest of Canada.[21]

By the early-1890s three liberal alternatives to diplomatic dependence on Great Britain were apparent. The first, espoused by Goldwin Smith, was immediate independence. Canadians had nothing to fear from the United States, he claimed: "the violence and unscrupulousness bred of slavery having passed away...[Americans] are a moral people. It would not be possible...to excite them to an unprovoked attack upon another free nation[.]"[22] In lieu of annexation, Smith argued, Canada had to "face its own responsibilities" as an "Anglo-Saxon [nation] in North America," free from the "apron strings of the mother country[.]"[23] The second alternative was Imperial Federation and participation by Canada in the formation and execution of British policy. As G.M. Grant told a Winnipeg audience:

> It is said that 'Imperial Federation would involve us in foreign relations.' We are so involved already...only, at present, we are without a voice as to the control of those relations...Ought we not contribute our share towards securing the peace of the empire...instead of being selfishly satisfied that we ourselves are out of reach of war?[24]

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[18] Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, I, 28.
[19] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 479-82; Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), pp. 159-85.
[20] Bothwell, *Your Country, My Country*, pp. 120-21, 126.
[21] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 7 April 1892.
[22] Smith, *Canada and the Canadians Question*, pp. 250-51.
[23] Ibid., p. 255.
[24] Grant, *Imperial Federation*, pp. 7-8, 10.

But the third most practical option was that outlined by Wilfrid Laurier - the deliberate extension of Dominion autonomy within the Empire. Though Laurier opposed an abrupt declaration of independence he equally deprecated the implications of imperial federalism:

> If colonists are to be represented at Westminster...[they] must assume the duties and responsibilities which are borne by Englishmen, Irishmen, and Scotchmen to carry on the wars in which they are almost perpetually engaged...I think these are consequences before which the people of Canada will recede.[25]

Instead, he sought the right for the Dominion to negotiate its own international commercial treaties. Canadian interests, he argued, were "so much at variance with the interests of Great Britain, that...we must...negotiate our own treaties and decide for ourselves what is best for us." Such a reform would "open new fields for Canadian ambition and...give us a station among foreign nations." Though Laurier admitted that "the power of making treaties is a sovereign power...[and] a marked departure from the old and accepted doctrine...respecting the relations between the parent state and the colony," he nonetheless maintained that Canada "commenced to revolutionise those old doctrines...when we obtained the power of self-government...[and] the power we seek...is simply an evolution of [that] movement[.]"[26]

Laurier thus advanced a view of Canada's international interests that was consistent with Britannic nationalism and a Whiggish view of colonial development. Notably, however, liberals widely impugned Canada's diplomatic dependence on the United Kingdom and regarded the spectre of a conflict with the United States in terms of a 'civil war.' This was due, in large measure, to notions of cultural and racial kinship. Though some Canadian historians have discounted the importance of Anglo-Saxonism and instead equated Anglo-Canadian imperialism with straightforward anti-Americanism,[27] Stuart Anderson, Reginald Horsman, Edward Kohn, and others have demonstrated the currency of Anglo-Saxonist ideology and its role in Anglo-American and Canadian-American

[25] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 7 April 1892.
[26] Ibid.
[27] See for especially Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*; Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, p. 162.

relations.[28] As G.M. Grant observed in 1896, the "increasing pride of race which makes [Britain] shrink from a quarrel with their American kinsfolk, as they would from a civil war...makes them refuse to entertain suggestions about parting with the self-governing Colonies[.]"[29]

II

Aside from George Denison - in whose paranoid view Americans were constantly "intriguing and preparing for war"[30] - few Anglo-Canadians imagined a conflict with the United States. In late-1895, however, an Anglo-American dispute arose over the boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana. The Cleveland Administration (1893-97) - responding to domestic political pressure - sent a belligerent note to Britain that asserted America's effective sovereignty in the Western hemisphere under the Monroe Doctrine and demanded restitution to Venezuela. The British Government, with considerable input from Joseph Chamberlain, repudiated the American claims.[31] President Grover Cleveland subsequently upheld the Monroe Doctrine's dubious standing in international law and, though he regretted the dispute between "the two great English-speaking peoples of the world," affirmed Washington's intention to resist British claims on Venezuelan territory.[32]

A brief war scare ensued. American newspapers threatened Canada and Cleveland's Secretary of State declared "any permanent union between a European state and an American state unnatural and inexpedient[.]"[33] Though it was evident that "Canada would be the battlefield" in an Anglo-American conflict, Canadians nonetheless resolutely supported Britain.[34] Perhaps, as one historian suggests, they recognised that "Cleveland was merely posturing...and that the crisis would

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[28] Stuart Anderson, *Race and Rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American Relations, 1895-1904* (London: Associated University Presses, 1981); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981); Kohn, *This Kindred People*; Srdjan Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialized Identity in International Relations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), ch. 2.
[29] G.M. Grant, "The Condition of the United Kingdom," *QQ* 4:2 (1896), p. 106.
[30] GDP/3-4/1886, Denison to Salisbury (copy), 9 December 1890.
[31] Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine*, pp. 201-8.
[32] Grover Cleveland, "Message Regarding Venezuelan-British Dispute, 17 December 1895." (online). Accessed 27 October 2015. http://millercenter.org/president/cleveland/speeches/message-regarding-venezuelan-british-dispute.
[33] Quoted in Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 122.
[34] Ibid.

soon blow over."[35] Indeed, neither side relished a 'fratricidal' war in South America and the crisis quickly abated when London and Washington agreed to arbitration.[36] For relieved Canadians the settlement reinforced the growing Anglo-Saxonist narrative.[37] Adam Shortt's relief was representative: "The unity of the English speaking people is far more important than their antagonism."[38]

The 'Venezuela Crisis,' moreover, had an important political effect on Wilfrid Laurier's emerging 'consensus.' First, when the crisis arose Laurier earned imperialist approval for his support of Canada's long-neglected militia and "other tactics...to meet an extraordinary situation."[39] The "loyal tone"[40] of his response, as historian Norman Penlington noted, "exposed the falsity of the stale Conservative changes of Liberal disloyalty[.]"[41] Second, Anglo-American rapprochement buttressed Laurier's case for improved Canadian-American relations. Even at the height of the crisis the Toronto *Globe* suggested that Britain could accept a "liberal and fair minded" interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine,[42] while G.M. Grant agreed that the Doctrine was a sound basis "for a better understanding between Britain [and] the States, as well as between Canada [and] the States."[4344] Finally, the episode bolstered John Willison's sense of Britannic nationalism. While the *Globe* lamented the Anglo-Saxon dispute over "a half-civilised Spanish-Indian power,"[45] it affirmed Canada's attachment to the British Empire.[46] "With...President Cleveland's menacing message," Willison told a Toronto audience in 1896, "we felt the solid ground beneath our feet, and...the splendid privileges of British citizenship."[47]

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[35] James Wood, *Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier, 1896-1921* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), p. 39.
[36] Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine*, pp. 208-9.
[37] Kohn, *This Kindred People*, pp. 42-8.
[38] ASP/1/3, Shortt to Haydon (copy), 2 May 1897.
[39] GDP/7-8/3002-3, Laurier to Denison, 6 February 1896.
[40] GDP/7-8/2993, Denison to Laurier (draft), 1 February 1896.
[41] Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 33-4.
[42] *TG*, 29 October 1895.
[43] WP/17/130/12207, G.M. Grant to Willison, 9 April 1896.
[44] WP/17/130/12200, G.M. Grant to Willison, 28 December 1895.
[45] *TG*, 29 October 1895.
[46] *TG*, 23 December 1895.
[47] Quoted in Clippingdale, *Willison*, p. 113.

But the Venezuela Crisis was just one example of America's new policy of 'expansionism.' In 1898, ostensibly to 'liberate' Cuba, Washington initiated the Spanish-American War and acquired Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico from Catholic Spain in an action justified in Anglo-Saxonist terms.[48] Great Britain welcomed the United States' entry into overseas imperialism and Anglo-Canadians celebrated the apparent consummation of an Anglo-Saxon alliance.[49] Even George Denison recorded that, "Anglo American Unity...is a good thing to talk about just now, and following the English lead, our papers...[and] public men...are friendly to the States."[50] The significance was plain to Wilfrid Laurier: "Everything now tends towards an alliance, which...must be the most potent factor that has yet taken place...in the advancement of civilization."[51]

Yet Anglo-Canadians also viewed American imperialism with some anxiety. Goldwin Smith, for his part, feared the corrosion of republican institutions. "I am all for American friendship and connexion," he wrote, "but I am not for partnership in jingo violence and aggression...fraught with the most serious consequences to the character and destiny of the Republic."[52] From the opposite end of the political spectrum, George Parkin equally recognised America's historic departure and the irony that the insular, anti-imperial Republic was now emulating Britain's imperial expansion:

> The exultation of the people at their comparatively easy success forms a measure of their humiliated feeling in realizing how powerless they are without stations in various parts of the world...they will be compelled to face European diplomacy...make themselves a great naval power...complete the canal through the Isthmus...and enter generally upon a new national course...anything which tends to make the United States a world power tends quite as much to give [Canada] a new significance in the world, and especially as part of the Empire. While there are great dangers...there are also considerable grounds for satisfaction.[53]

On the whole, however, Laurier's Anglo-Canadian allies cautiously welcomed the Imperial Republic and its entente with the British Empire. G.M. Grant, for instance, believed that while "the

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[48] Matthew McCullough, *The Cross of War: Christian Nationalism and U.S. Expansion in the Spanish-American War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), ch. 4; Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine*, pp. 211-12.
[49] Kohn, *This Kindred People*, ch. 3; Graeme Mount, "Friendly Liberator or Predatory Aggressor? Some Canadian Impressions of the United States during the Spanish-American War," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 11:22 (1986), pp. 59-70.
[50] GDP/7-8/3492-3, Denison to Salisbury (copy), 12 June 1898.
[51] LP/C-757/24462, Laurier to Reid (copy), 24 June 1898.
[52] JBP/16/99,103, Smith to Bryce, 3 June 1898. See also Goldwin Smith, *Commonwealth or Empire: A Bystander's View of the Question* (New York: Macmillan, 1902).
[53] AMP/206/328, Parkin to Milner, 10 May 1898.

U.S. has blundered into the war...morally, the U.S. is in the right."[54] Spain was a declining, unprogressive power and though Cuba and the Philippines could not, on racial grounds, be incorporated into the Republic neither could Americans ignore their new responsibilities. Regardless, "the progress of events," Grant concluded, "is making it evident...that the future of the world depends upon...Britain and the States."[55] John Willison effectively endorsed Grant's view, though he echoed Goldwin Smith's concern over the growth of American jingoism. American politicians, he claimed, combined the "arrogance of numbers and the very insolence of power." Their speeches

> were militant in tone and jingoistic in essence...the war spirit, the lust of conquest and the vanities of power and possession are as native in the American democracy as in any despot-ruled, war-making empire that the world has ever seen. It would be folly to deny that there is danger in this feverish war spirit...aggression could easily assume the disguise of a crusade for liberty, and [the belief] that...a satisfactory definition of freedom is the royal will and pleasure of the American Republic.[56]

Americans, Adam Shortt agreed, especially "the ignorant and novelty-struck, being doubtless in the majority, seem quite prepared to launch...on any sort of expansive course."[57] Nonetheless, both Shortt and Willison endorsed the assertion of American power and its rapprochement with the British Empire. As Willison put it: "Anglo-Saxons everywhere rejoice to-day over the extraordinary growth of good feeling between Great Britain and the United States...Most of us believe that final good will come out of the destruction of Spanish power...and that, next to the British Empire the free Republic of the United States is...the secular agency in the world best worth preserving."[58]

III

This relative comfort with American 'expansionism' reflected, as Edward Kohn argues, the Anglo-Saxonist tenor of American imperialism, the Anglo-American entente, and the redirection of America's more aggressive impulses away from Canada.[59] Despite reservations over Washington's

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[54] GPP/7-12/ 3420, G.M. Grant to Parkin, 5 May 1898.
[55] G.M. Grant, "Current Events," *QQ* 5:4 (1898), pp. 325-6.
[56] Willison, *The American Spirit*, p. 4.
[57] Adam Shortt, "Current Events," *QQ* 6:1 (1898), p. 82.
[58] John Willison, *Journalism: An Address Delivered Before the Political Science Club of Toronto University by J.S. Willison, Editor of the Globe, on November 23, 1899* (Toronto[?]: The Globe[?], 1899 or 1900), pp. 9-11.
[59] Kohn, *This Kindred People*, p. 94-5.

conduct in the Spanish-American War, Anglo-Saxonism had transformed Anglo-Canadian perceptions of the United States. Opinion swung behind improved Canadian-American relations and in 1898-9 a Joint High Commission was established to settle outstanding North American disputes. Though London retained formal sovereignty Wilfrid Laurier led the negotiations in a favourable context of burgeoning Britannic nationalism and Anglo-American friendship. The "new prosperity that followed development of the West," Oscar Skelton observed, "made it possible for Canada to be haughty in her turn."[60]

Among the Commission's main concerns were the boundary between Alaska and British Columbia and the renegotiation of the convention on Great Lakes arms control. The latter proved contentious as the United States sought to construct warships on the lakes before transiting through Canadian canals to the Atlantic.[61] As Willison informed Laurier: "Such men as Colonel Denison...Principal Grant and others...are resolutely determined to fight any proposal to have American war vessels...pass through Canadian canals."[62] Concessions on this point, he added, threatened to "promote a military spirit in American ports."[63] Laurier, however, proposed that American ships could pass, one at a time and unarmed, through Canadian territory. His reasoning revealed a keen sense of American power and ambition. Irrespective of Canada's views, he wrote to Willison, "the United States are going to construct a navy."[64]

> Of course if we could keep them from building ships in their own waters, that would be the easiest solution of all, but, if you believe that the American people with their new policy of expansion, are to be prevented from using...the interior waters, to the full extent of their territorial sovereignty...you fail to consider the present temper of public opinion in the United States.[65]

Eventually, Laurier's *Realpolitik* compromise earned the support of his sceptical Anglo-Canadian allies.[66] The incident, though, illustrated Canadians' growing confidence in their relations

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[60] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 122.
[61] Brown, *Canada's National Policy*, pp. 353-5.
[62] LP/C-759/26824, Willison to Laurier, 28 September 1898.
[63] LP/C-761/28615, Willison to Laurier, 7 December 1898.
[64] WP/24/179/17864, Laurier to Willison, 4 December 1898.
[65] WP/24/179/17868, Laurier to Willison, 17 December 1898.
[66] GDP/7-8/3655, Dension to Laurier (draft), 28 December 1898; LP/C-761/28949-50, G.M. Grant to Laurier, 26 December 1898; WP/17/130/12247-8, G.M. Grant to Willison, 5 December 1898.

with Washington. Laurier even worried that Liberals harboured delusions of "breaking off negotiations, [and] proudly coming back to Canada, thus showing the Americans that we are made of some stern stuff." This, he complained, was contrary to the longstanding Liberal principle "that we should have more friendly relations with our neighbours."[67] But the negotiations stalled over the boundary of the Alaska 'panhandle,' which gained importance as a transit route following the discovery of gold in the Klondike in 1896-7. The details need not detain us, except inasmuch as Laurier had hoped "to arbitrate upon the terms of the Venezuela treaty. This [the Americans] would not consent to."[68] With the support of leading liberals, Laurier left Washington and returned to Ottawa without a border settlement.[69]

The case later went before a judicial tribunal, "to be composed," Laurier reported, "of jurists of repute taken from the American judiciary and from the British judiciary...'British' in its most extensive sense, including, of course, Canada."[70] Canadians, John Dafoe observed, were confident in their position but did not wish "to prevent, by wilfulness or selfishness, the unification of the Anglo-Saxon race...[and] are prepared to leave judgment on this point to the intelligence of Anglo-Saxondom when all the facts are laid bare."[71] The tribunal of three Americans, two Canadians, and Lord Alverstone of the United Kingdom, however, voted 4-2 in favour of the United States - with both Canadian representatives dissenting. As in 1871 the result reinforced the view that Britain would always concede Canadian interests to Washington.[72] "This Alaska business," Goldwin Smith noted, "has had a good effect in breaking the ice of conventional 'loyalty' and inclining people towards an increase of self government."[73] "The question," John Willison agreed, "could have been settled between Ottawa and Washington...with more regard for our dignity than was manifested by

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[67] WP/24/179/17871-77, Laurier to Willison, 7 January 1899.
[68] LP/C-763/30793-93(A), Laurier to G.M. Grant (copy), 27 February 1899.
[69] See for example LP/C-761/28447, Sifton to Laurier, 29 November 1898, C-763/31007, G.M. Grant to Laurier, 4 March 1899.
[70] WP/24/179/17995-6, Laurier to Willison, 28 January 1903.
[71] John W. Dafoe, "The Alaskan Boundary: Canada's Side of the Case," *The Independent* [New York] 51:2637 (15 June 1899), p. 1614.
[72] Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, I, pp. 98-9.
[73] HBP/M-721, Smith to Bourassa, 16 November 1903; GDP/11-12/4897, Bourassa to Denison, 24 October 1903.

the British plenipotentiary."[74] But despite the apparent failure Laurier nonetheless improved and institutionalised Canadian-American relations.[75] The Dominion's growing stature in the British Empire, combined with the geopolitical reassurance provided by the Anglo-Saxon rapprochement, boosted Anglo-Canadian confidence in relations with Washington. Though the "Alaskan boundary dispute," John Dafoe recalled, encouraged "Canada to take charge of her external affairs," this was not a step towards separation from the Empire[76] - it was an assertion of Britannic nationalism facilitated by the wider climate of Anglo-American amity.[77]

The South African War

I

The South African War (1899-1902) was a concurrent example of the same Britannic nationalist phenomenon. Previously, Anglo-Canadians had been sceptical of participation in imperial wars. As Goldwin Smith accurately recollected, "The suggestion at the time of the Soudan War was received with a broad cheer of disapprobation."[78] Indeed, imperial federalists had been forced to deny that their plans meant "taking away our sons to fight in Burmah [sic] and Afghanistan."[79] But the upsurge of Britannic nationalism in the 1890s encouraged Joseph Chamberlain to press for Dominion involvement in 'Imperial defence.' At the 1897 Colonial Conference, however, Wilfrid Laurier insisted that the Dominions' local interests were irreconcilable with a centralised Imperial system. Canada, he argued, had already "done a good deal...for the defence of this Empire...in building railways from a strategical [*sic*]point of view," and unlike the Antipodeans viewed an Imperial Navy "rather as an academical [*sic*] question[.]"[80] Clearly, the "geographical conditions" were "not at all the same." Whereas Australia and New Zealand were "so far away, that in the case of war [they] have no

[74] Willison, "The Spirit of Canada," pp. 89-90.
[75] Bothwell, *The Penguin History*, p. 272.
[76] Dafoe, *Sifton*, p. 211.
[77] A distinction seemingly overlooked in Brown, *Canada's National Policy*, chs. 11-12.
[78] JBP/16/67, Smith to Bryce, 9 April 1889; Roy MacLaren, *Canadians on the Nile, 1882-1898* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1978), pp. 126-29.
[79] Grant, *Imperial Federation*, p. 3.
[80] CCC/C-1366/Colonial Conference Proceedings, 1897, p. 61.

defence at all," Canada was "an inaccessible country...easily guarded" and bordered by "a powerful nation" with whom "we look upon our conflicts...as family troubles[.]"[81] As historian John Mitcham notes, while "New Zealand and the Australian states reaffirmed [their] naval subsidy arrangement [with Britain]...Canada declined to participate."[82] The British preference, discussed earlier, ensured that Laurier was lauded on return to Canada despite his rebuff of Chamberlain. Laurier, John Willison claimed, "put Canada before the British people...as a free, self-governing kingdom, and Canadians...as fellow-subjects...asserting full sovereignty within their own domain."[83]

The South African War erupted in this context and Laurier faced widespread demands, at least in Anglophone Canada and perhaps especially in Ontario, for Canadian participation. Most Anglo-Canadians sympathised with British South Africans, or Uitlanders, as part of a global British 'race' and condemned what the Toronto *Globe* called "the Conspiracy For Dutch Domination in South Africa."[84] This dovetailed, as Oscar Skelton observed, with a "wide-spread feeling that with increasing strength and prosperity the Dominion should take a more active part in imperial and world affairs."[85] Canadian historians, however, have struggled to explain the Dominion's involvement in South Africa. The foundational account - later revised though not entirely abandoned - contended that anti-Boer newspapers and British politicians misled Canadians into participation.[86] But this explanation was dismissed by Laurier and subsequent historians.[87] Others identified anti-Americanism,[88] 'progressive' central Canadian nationalism,[89] imperialism and Christian idealism,[90]

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[81] Ibid., pp. 62, 147.
[82] John Mitcham, *Race and Imperial Defence in the British World, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 65.
[83] Willison, *Laurier*, II, pp. 310-11.
[84] *TG*, 2 October 1899.
[85] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 90.
[86] Ibid., p. 89-90; Dafoe, *Laurier*, pp. 77-81. See also Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, pp. 38-9.
[87] JDP/M-73, Laurier to Dafoe, 3 November 1901; H. Pearson Gundy, "Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Lord Minto," *RCHA* 31:1 (1952), pp. 28-38.
[88] Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, pp. 198-225.
[89] Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p. 17.
[90] Robert J.D. Page, "Canada and the Imperial Idea in the Boer War Years," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 5:1 (1970), pp. 33-49; Gordon L. Heath, *A War with a Silver Lining: Canadian Protestant Churches and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

and Anglo-Saxonism[91] as ideological motivations for intervention. A simpler answer, however, is that the war prompted an assertion of Britannic nationalism, which to some degree comprised all of these considerations. As Philip Buckner rightly notes, "Most English Canadians...[sought] to create a stronger nation within the Empire," and the South African War afforded that opportunity.[92]

II

At the outset of the war Wilfrid Laurier took an instinctively 'Gladstonian' position against Canadian intervention. "I am very concerned about this Transvaal business," he wrote to John Willison, and "I am not prepared to think that it is a wise policy, even from an imperial point of view, to take a share in all the secondary wars in which England is always engaged."[93] Laurier, Willison recalled, "would not admit that the fact of war necessarily involved Canada in the conflict." But Ontario, led by Toronto, demanded participation and Willison advised Laurier to this effect.[94] The Liberal Premier subsequently confirmed the deployment of a Canadian contingent to South Africa while the *Globe* cheered Canada's "Soldiers of the Queen!"[95] "When we met again [in Toronto]," Willison reminisced, "[Laurier] frankly admitted that public feeling in the English Provinces was too strong to be opposed and...the Government could not afford to...withhold Canada from a struggle in which the other Dominions would be engaged."[96]

Unlike the Spanish-American War, however, the South African War was discussed in predominantly Britannic rather than Anglo-Saxonist terms. This reflected the intra-imperial nature of the conflict, the importance of conciliating French-Canadian opinion, and the difficulty of deploying Anglo-Saxonist rhetoric against white protestant Dutch settlers. Initially, G.M. Grant even opposed

[91] Kohn, *This Kindred People*, ch. 4.
[92] Phillip Buckner, "Canada," in Andrew S. Thompson and David Omissi (eds.), *The Impact of the South African War* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2002), p. 234.
[93] WP/24/179/17906-8, Laurier to Willison, 5 October 1899.
[94] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 304.
[95] *TG*, 14 October 1899.
[96] Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 304.

the conflict and sympathised publicly with the plight of the Boers.[97] Only "Kruger's mad ultimatum"[98] and "the British ideal of civilisation," redeemed what he regarded as "the most deplorable war in our history."[99] Imperialists, though, hoped that wartime cooperation would spur "representation at the centre of the Empire," and Grant was no different in this respect.[100] The Canadian response to the conflict, he claimed, proved that "the British Empire is a living unity[.]"[101]

But such views were not the sole provenance of imperialists. Adam Shortt, Grant's liberal autonomist colleague, approved a "sane, wholesome and indefinitely expansible Imperialism...built upon the broad and varied base of British civilization." He too believed that "from the hour of Kruger's fatal ultimatum, no other alternative was...possible for Britain than to fight...to the miserable end[.]"[102] As John Willison asserted: "Few of us doubt the necessity for the war in South Africa from the standpoint of British interests and British supremacy."[103] Not only was Britain's war 'just,' but Ontario liberals saw Canadian participation in fundamentally Britannic terms. As the *Globe* put it: "The despatch of a Canadian contingent would be...a national declaration of Canada's stake in the British Empire."[104] Unlike previous British imperial wars, South Africa was conceived as a 'Greater British' conflict in which the Dominions were deeply implicated.

Though Laurier authorised the deployment of Canadian contingents his initial hesitation aggravated many, especially Conservative, Ontarians.[105] There was "a very great uproar," Willison reported, "Toronto and, I fear, a good part of Ontario is panicky."[106] As he later explained:

> The popular temper demanded the immediate organization of contingents, and anyone who stopped to...emphasize the gravity of the contemplated departure...was held to be indifferent to the fortunes

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[97] G.M. Grant, "Current Events," *QQ* 5:3 (1898), pp. 247-9.
[98] WP/17/130/12253, G.M. Grant to Willison, 22 November 1899.
[99] G.M. Grant, *QQ* 7:3 (1900), p. 252; GPP/13-18/4121a-b, G.M. Grant to Parkin, 1 February 1900; JBP/72/81, G.M. Grant to Bryce, 21 April 1902.
[100] AMP/214/214-16, Parkin to Milner, 18 January 1901; GPP/13-18/4121b, G.M. Grant to Parkin, 1 February 1900;
[101] G.M. Grant, "Introductory Chapter," in T.G. Marquis, *Canada's Sons on Kopje and Veldt: A Historical Account of the Canadian Contingents* (Toronto: The Canada's Sons Publishing Co., 1900), pp. 1-3.
[102] Adam Shortt, "Current Events," *QQ* 9:2 (1901), pp. 148-9.
[103] John Willison, "The Function of Journalism in a Democracy," *QQ* 8:4 (1901), p. 304.
[104] *TG*, 3 October 1899.
[105] WP/24/179/17912-13, Laurier to Willison, 14 October 1899.
[106] LP/C-769/38045, Willison to Laurier, 14 October 1899.

> of the Empire, opposed to the war itself, and hostile, under any circumstances, to Canadian cooperation with British troops in South Africa.[107]

Laurier, however, supported what he regarded as Britain's defence of liberal principles.[108] "It goes without saying," he wrote to imperialist George Denison, "that...British rule means freedom for all, Dutch rule means freedom for the Dutch alone, [and] subjection for all others."[109] Yet he also claimed that the Canadian deployment set no precedent for future interventions:

> I cannot admit that Canada should take part in all the wars of Great Britain, neither am I prepared to say that she should not take part in any war at all. I am prepared to look upon each case upon its merits as it arises; and when I considered the object for which Great Britain was fighting...the refusal by the government of the Transvaal to the Uitlanders of...equal rights...when I saw the enthusiasm manifested...in all parts of Canada...we decided to send a contingent...I have no hesitation in admitting that I was not enthusiastic for that war, or for any war...[and] I claim...that, in future, Canada...shall reserve to herself the right to judge whether or not there is cause for her to act.[110]

III

But Britannic nationalism manifested in other ways, including demands to pay the full cost of the Canadian contingent and ensure its organisation into national units.[111] "What could be more appropriate," asked the *Globe*, "than the prominent use of the maple leaf or the beaver as a badge or in the appointments of officers and men?"[112] Pressure was especially acute in urban Ontario, and Willison advised Laurier

> to pay the contingents in full...If we give our opponents an issue on this question we could not hope to hold constituencies in such places as Toronto, Hamilton, London and Kingston...the men most concerned in this question are the men of character and influence...who on most other grounds are friendly to you and your government. Why give these men back to the Conservative party?[113]

Laurier's solution, as ever, was a compromise by which the Dominion transported Canadian soldiers to South Africa while Britain sustained them in the field. This was the "arrangement laid

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[107] Willison, *Laurier*, II, pp. 325.
[108] Neatby, "Laurier and Imperialism," in *Imperial Relations in the Age of Laurier*, p. 6.
[109] GDP/9-10/3955-7, Laurier to Denison, 27 March 1900.
[110] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 5 February 1900.
[111] See for example LP/C-770/39480-2, Denison to Laurier, 4 December 1899, C-771/39907-8, 40656-60, G.M. Grant to Laurier, 17 December 1899, 1 January 1900.
[112] *TG,* 3 October 1899;
[113] LP/C-772/41287-9, Willison to Laurier, 20 January 1900.

down by the Imperial war office," he argued, which aided in "bring[ing] all sections of the population to agree to the action which we have taken."[114] Of course, Laurier was primarily concerned to deflect criticism from Henri Bourassa over imperial expenditures.[115] But two other considerations underpinned his position. The first was ideological. As he told Willison frankly: "I doubt the wisdom of Canada going into military expenditure."[116] The second was lukewarm support for the war in the critical Liberal territory of rural western Ontario. This has been largely overlooked by historians who focus on Goldwin Smith as the war's leading opponent,[117] treating "'English' Canada for practical purposes [as] a bloc in favour of the war."[118] An exception is Carman Miller, who noted that "classical liberals, opposed to the new imperialism, big government, big business, standing armies, and taxation," centred the anti-war minority.[119] These opponents, though a decided minority, were concentrated amongst the Liberal-leaning farmers of southwestern Ontario.[120] Goldwin Smith, who owned the anti-war farmers' newspaper *The Weekly Sun*, observed that the jingo "'enthusiasm' was pretty much confined to Toronto,"[121] while the farmers, "though attached to the mother country, are against participation in the war."[122] Though difficult to quantify, anti-war sentiment certainly existed in rural Ontario.[123] As W.D. Gregory wrote to Henri Bourassa, his anti-war views were

> shared by a far larger number of people in this Province [Ontario] than is generally supposed...There are many Liberals here who feel quite at sea and wonder where it is all going to end. When Laurier was in Opposition we looked on him as an opponent of militarism but now he seems to be afraid to make any stand against...the popular opinion. Surely this state of affairs cannot last.[124]

Indeed, since Laurier reaffirmed his association with agrarians, radicals, and autonomists after the war there is evidence to believe that he understood the potential consequences of

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[114] WP/24/179/17933-5, Laurier to Willison, 15 January 1900.
[115] Neatby, *Laurier*, 107.
[116] WP/24/179/17907, Laurier to Willison, 5 October 1899. See also GDP/9-10/3696, Laurier to Denison, 22 March 1899.
[117] See especially Brown, "Goldwin Smith and Anti-Imperialism," pp. 96-104.
[118] Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, I, p. 72.
[119] Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, pp. 17, 22.
[120] See Carman Miller, "English-Canadian Opposition to the South African War as seen through the Press," *CHR* 54:4 (1974), pp. 423-7.
[121] Smith to Merriman, 1 December 1899, in Haultain (ed.), *Correspondence*, p. 334.
[122] GSP/M-2190, Goldwin Smith to John Merriman (copy), 31 January 1900.
[123] Miller, "English-Canadian Opposition," pp. 426-7.
[124] HBP/M-721, Gregory to Bourassa, 3 March 1900.

alienating his liberal 'base' in Anglophone Canada. Moreover, he had reached diminishing returns in his political cultivation of urban Ontario. At the 1900 election the Liberals lost seats in the province even as they increased their overall parliamentary majority.[125] Willison's analysis was prescient - the Government hemorrhaged support in urban areas where the Conservative press attacked Laurier as 'un-British.'[126] This "exceedingly dangerous and un-Canadian campaign," remarked the *Globe*, was "largely intended for consumption in Toronto."[127] "I am, like yourself," Laurier confessed to Willison, "much disappointed with the result in Ontario."[128] "The vote in this province was...painful and distressing," Willison agreed, "and I resented the verdict accordingly."[129] Significantly, though, Willison blamed imperialists for the result. "The policy of [Laurier's] administration...was peculiarly a Toronto and an Ontario policy," he complained to George Parkin:

> the sending of the contingents were what Ontario demanded. Ontario responded not at all...Laurier is to risk everything, the imperialists...talk loyalty at large and vote Tory when the election comes...I think I have done something to lead the Government in the direction of the imperial ideal. My only reward was to fight in Ontario the most disastrous battle that the Liberal party ever fought.[130]

This rebuke points to two Ontario liberal responses to the South African War, and the conflict's role in accelerating the fission of Ontario liberalism. The first was the growth of liberal imperialism among Toronto liberals. Willison in particular increasingly identified with the imperialist cause, and it was the South African War, he recalled at the dedication of the memorial in Toronto in 1910, that proved Canadians were "resolved that we should not evade the responsibilities...which belong to British citizenship in the crises of the Empire."[131] At the same time, George Wrong added, Canadian participation meant that "Great Britain will in future have to support <u>what we want</u> on this continent."[132] The second development was a liberal autonomist resurgence. As Goldwin Smith

[125] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 81,
[126] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, pp. 113-14, 117; Willison, *Laurier*, II, pp. 334-42.
[127] *TG*, 8 November 1900.
[128] WP/24/179/17950, Laurier to Willison, 12 November 1900.
[129] LP/C-788/59890-91, Willison to Laurier, 11 November 1901.
[130] WP/32/243/24133-5, Willison to Parkin (draft), 2 June 1902.
[131] WP/53/39307, 'The true seed of Britain,' 24 May 1910.
[132] WP/50/344/36324, Wrong to Willison, 2 February 1900 (emphasis in original).

wrote in 1903: "I begin to feel the balmy air of incipient reaction."[133] For liberals like John Dafoe, Oscar Skelton, and John Ewart the South African War motivated a renewed opposition to imperialism.[134] This was certainly true of Skelton, who lamented in 1902 that the "imperialist flood seems running high all thru' the empire...[and] fears trouble me that...Canadian independence, is fated to be only an ideal." How, he wondered, could there "be any...continuity of interest between Canada and...whatever other part of the map a jingoistic spree may chance to paint red[?]"[135] Yet while the war re-energised anti-imperialism liberal autonomists nonetheless embraced Britannic nationalism and the idea of a "Britannic Alliance" in international relations.[136] This anti-imperial Britishness was epitomised by John Dafoe at the height of the war in 1901: "The best interests of the Empire are served by the colonies jealously preserving their full self-governing powers, and...any attempt by the Home authorities to encroach upon these rights...would do incalculable harm.[137]

Britannic Alliance and Imperial Defence

I

The growing divergence between liberal imperialists and autonomists was evident as Wilfrid Laurier embarked for the 1902 Colonial Conference. Again, Joseph Chamberlain was expected to push for the centralisation of Imperial defence. In Ontario, John Willison reported to Laurier, there was "some feeling...on the question...but as yet it is not formidable."[138] Laurier's response set the terms of debate for the next decade: "With regard to...Imperial Defence I am prepared for a storm, but...I am not disposed to go into military expenditure any more than we have done in the past."[139] The next day he confirmed to Parliament that it "would be the most suicidal policy for the Canadian

[133] JBP/16/190, Smith to Bryce, 4 January 1903. See also Goldwin Smith, *In the Court of History: An Apology for Canadians who were Opposed to the South African War* (Toronto: William Tyrell, 1902).
[134] Cook, *John W. Dafoe and the Free Press*, p. 14.
[135] ASP/1/7, Skelton to Shortt, 1 March 1902.
[136] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 346.
[137] CSP/97/76245/24, Dafoe to Sifton, 18 October 1901.
[138] LP/C-792/64196, Willison to Laurier, 11 April 1902.
[139] WP/24/179/17976, Laurier to Willison, 14 April 1902.

people...to enter into the vortex...which compels...England...to maintain great military armaments."[140]

Liberal autonomists commended Laurier's speech. John Ewart wrote to the Prime Minister: "[Y]ou are courageous...to assert that Canada ought to keep herself well out of the European war-vortex...The speech...is in fact a distinct 'No' to the first proposition...for war co-operation. It is...the legitimate outcome of Canada's historic...determination to manage her own affairs[.][141] W.D. Gregory expressed similar views, connecting Canadian autonomy to North American diplomacy:

> Your position...will, I feel assured, meet with the approval of the people of this Province [Ontario] now that the war fever has abated...A matter which has a close hearing on our policy...is the attitude of the United States...So far as this continent is concerned they are bound to have their way and I do not believe that any arrangement for inter-Imperial defence would pass unnoticed.[142]

Again, Laurier's reply was illuminating: "The diplomatic effect of the jingo policy which I now try to check, is well indicated in your letter. I had that same view in my mind for a long time."[143]

Laurier's correspondence with Ontario liberals illustrated three salient points. First, his opposition to Imperial defence integration reinforced his support among liberal autonomist intellectuals and 'Greater Ontario' farmers. Second, it was clear, Laurier wrote to Willison, that "the good city of Toronto" was the epicentre of the "movement...to force me into military expenditure."[144] And third, Laurier understood Canada's geopolitical interests in 'British-American' terms: the Dominion had obligations as part of the British Empire yet increasingly autonomous relations with the United States. Though Canadians could "relieve England of any expenditure of a military character in Canada," he wrote to Willison, "anything beyond, which would bring us into a general scheme of military expenditure, would be a mistake. At all events, it is repugnant to the convictions of all my life, and...I am quite ready to take the consequences."[145]

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[140] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 15 April 1902.
[141] LP/C-793/64415-6, Ewart to Laurier, 17 April 1902.
[142] LP/C-793/64399-400, Gregory to Laurier, 17 April 1902.
[143] WDGP/2/1902A-L, Laurier to Gregory, 19 April 1902; JEP/1/22, Laurier to Ewart, 21 April 1902.
[144] WP/24/179/17980-1, Laurier to Willison, 19 May 1902.
[145] WP/24/179/17984, Laurier to Willison, 12 June 1902.

Predictably, these included the disapproval of imperialists who hoped to establish an imperial "defence fund"[146] or a "general military system of the Empire."[147] The Liberal position was "very unsatisfactory," George Parkin lamented.[148] "Sir Wilfrid stuck to his guns...that we must not be dragged into the militarism of Europe."[149] Yet even the new Conservative leader Robert Borden was sceptical. As John Willison noted, Borden was "of course, entirely British," though against "any impairment of Canadian self government even through an Imperial partnership."[150] More significant for Laurier, however, was that Willison was attracted to the idea of a joint Imperial "fund for defence."[151] "Canada," he claimed, "will hardly shirk any legitimate obligation...as an integral part of the British dominions.[152]

Nonetheless, Laurier and the other Dominion Premiers scuttled Chamberlain's proposals, and between 1904-6 Canada assumed responsibility for the naval bases at Halifax and Esquimalt.[153] Tariff Reform subsequently divided British Conservatives and Unionists and the 1906 general election returned the Liberals to power at Westminster. This relieved the pressure from London for defence integration and earned Laurier greater autonomy in external affairs, particularly with the United States. As he wrote to James Bryce, "we should extend our relations with [the Americans] wherever practicable."[154] To this end, Bryce supported a General Arbitration Treaty (1908) between Ottawa and Washington and the establishment of a Canadian Department of External Affairs in 1909.[155] Furthermore, as Skelton noted, "For special diplomatic tasks, cabinet ministers or private citizens were accredited with varying formality."[156] Examples included Rodolphe Lemieux's (1866-

[146] WP/11/92/7854, Dension to Willison, 1 May 1902.
[147] LAP/AMEL/2/5/2, Parkin to Amery, 12 June 1903.
[148] GDP/9-10/4543, Parkin to Denison, 18 April 1902.
[149] GDP/11-12/4612, Parkin to Denison, 14 May 1902.
[150] GDP/11-12/4621-2, Willison to Denison, 16 May 1902.
[151] GDP/11-12/4679, Willison to Denison, 8 June [1902].
[152] Willison, *Laurier*, II, p. 300.
[153] Marc Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century, 2nd ed.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), pp. 11-13; Richard Preston, *Canada and 'Imperial Defense': A Study of the Origins of the British Commonwealth's Defense Organization, 1867-1919* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), pp. 283-307.
[154] LP/C-847/123460, Laurier to Bryce (copy), 6 April 1907.
[155] F.A. Coghlan, "James Bryce and the Establishment of the Department of External Affairs," *HP* 3:1 (1968), p. 89.
[156] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 347.

1937) negotiation of the 'Gentlemen's Agreement' with Japan (1908), missions by W.L.M. King to India and China (1909), tariff negotiations with European nations, and John Ewart's work as a Canadian negotiator at Washington and The Hague (1910).[157] The improvement and institutionalisation of Canadian-American relations, however, was Bryce's most significant Canadian legacy.[158]

During the 1900s, then, liberal autonomists were ascendant and proponents of Imperial defence integration, John Willison recalled, were "treated merely as fretful or garrulous imperialists."[159] Yet they too welcomed closer ties with Washington. Willison, for example, lauded the "union of affection and interest between the United States and the British communities," which he hoped would "stand together for the spread of Anglo-Saxon civilisation and the integrity of the English-speaking nations."[160] George Parkin similarly told a Toronto audience in 1907: "I cannot give you any idea of the depth of feeling which I have with regard to...our relations to that great country [the United States]."[161] But if imperialist anti-Americanism has been overstated so too has autonomist antipathy to the British 'connection.' Liberals, rather than rejecting that connection sought to secure it on a more sustainable and equitable basis. "British connection," John Ewart concisely stated, "does not involve, or depend upon, subjection or subordination."[162] The debate over Canada's external affairs thus hinged, not on 'Britishness' or closer relations with Washington, but the Dominion's continuing dependence on British diplomacy. The 1907 Imperial Conference, however, approved decentralisation and local Dominion navies as the basis of Greater British defence, and many imperialists blamed Laurier for the outcome.[163] "Sir Wilfred [*sic*] is so unwilling to

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[157] Ibid., pp. 347-8, 355. See also O.D. Skelton, "Canada and the Most Favored Nation Treaties," *QQ* 19:3 (1912), pp. 231-52; John Hilliker, *Canada's Department of External Affairs* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), p. 90.

[158] JBP/USA/30/160, Laurier to Bryce, 15 June 1910; Peter Neary, "Grey, Bryce, and the Settlement of Canadian-American Differences, 1905-1911," *CHR* 49:4 (1968), pp. 357-80.

[159] Willison, *Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, II, p. 382.

[160] Willison, "The Spirit of Canada," pp. 78, 92. See also *TN*, 5 July 1909.

[161] Parkin, "The Relations of Canada and the United States," p. 158.

[162] John Ewart, "The Kingdom of Canada, part 2," *Canadian Law Review* 3 (1904), p. 546. See also LP/C-828/103920, Shortt to Laurier, 11 December 1905; Adam Shortt, "The Colonial Conference and its Functions," *QQ* 14:4 (1907), p. 319

[163] Mitcham, *Race and Imperial Defence*, p. 137; Preston, *Canada and 'Imperial Defense'*, p. 361.

take any lead," George Parkin complained, "except as a very restraining force."[164] Willison, now an adviser to Robert Borden, similarly regarded Laurier's re-election in 1908 as "a set back to the whole imperial movement."[165] Autonomists, conversely, praised Laurier's performance at London. Indeed, John Ewart had warned that if "the Conference is confined to proposals for the restoration of United Kingdom supremacy [and] ascendancy...[including] subscriptions to [the] Imperial Navy, there is danger to Canadian nationality."[166] But he saw the results - reflected in the rechristening of the Conferences as 'Imperial' rather than 'Colonial' - as a victory for Canada's "traditional policy of self-government."[167] "I was much pleased with the result of the Conference," W.D. Gregory wrote similarly to Laurier, "you put us more nearly in the position of a nation than we have ever been before."[168]

II

In 1909, however, debates over Canada's external affairs were upended by the Anglo-German naval race. Germany had embarked on a programme of naval armament to challenge the hegemony of the Royal Navy and British politicians looked to the Dominions for support.[169] The 'Naval Scare' thus suddenly imparted international affairs with new significance for Canadians. "The naval situation has excited Canada greatly," John Willison reported, and "we have a feeling very like that which sent the contingents to South Africa."[170] Laurier, for his part, responded to the situation by reaffirming plans for the establishment of an autonomous Canadian navy. On 29 March 1909 the House of Commons unanimously endorsed his proposal for "the speedy organization of a Canadian naval service...in

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[164] GWP/B2003/005/004/3/3, Parkin to Wrong, 23 April 1907. See also LAP/AMEL 2/5/6, Amery to King (copy), 15 July 1907; WP/22/165/16460-64, Jebb to Willison, 16 and 23 April 1907; RJP/ICS/116/A/1907/Jan-June, Jebb to Willison (copy), 16 and 23 April 1907.
[165] RJP/ICS/116/A/1908/July-Dec, Willison to Jebb, 12 November 1908.
[166] LP/C-846/122311, Ewart to Laurier, 12 March 1907.
[167] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, I, p. 109.
[168] LP/C-850/126790-91, Gregory to Laurier, 25 July 1907.
[169] Donald Gordon, "The Admiralty and Dominion Navies, 1902-1914," *The Journal of Modern History* 33:4 (1961), pp. 411-12.
[170] RJP/ICS/A/1909/Jan-Sept, Willison to Jebb, 23 March 1909.

close relation to the imperial navy...[and] in full sympathy with the view that the naval supremacy of Britain is essential to...the safety of the empire and the peace of the world."[171]

But the resolution, far from settling, revived debate over Canada's geopolitical interests. As ever, the United States was central. Having acquired an overseas empire in 1898 Washington proceeded to construct a navy that "by 1907 was the second largest in the world."[172] In 1908 the American 'Great White Fleet' embarked on a global tour with stops in the Antipodean Dominions - signalling its blue-water capabilities and advertising the Anglo-Saxon entente.[173] Washington, arguably more than Britain, now guaranteed Canada's security. "From Europe," George Wrong noted, Canadians feared "nothing, since...Canada would inevitably be backed by the United States."[174] The Monroe Doctrine, John Ewart agreed, "is our guarantee that defence shall not be necessary."[175] In this context, a minority of liberals, notably Goldwin Smith and W.D. Gregory, doubted the necessity of naval defence.[176] "As it is," Oscar Skelton wrote sympathetically, "the prospect of ever-growing naval expenditure...leads an earnest minority...to oppose any naval outlay whatever."[177] For most liberals, however, pragmatism and Britannic nationalism overruled the appeal of 'isolationism.'[178] Taking "shelter under the Monroe doctrine while contributing nothing towards the American Navy," John Willison argued, "suggests the servility without the courage of mercenaries."[179] Skelton reached the same conclusion: "To accept defence from Britain without making any return would...be a shameful policy, but it would be heroic compared to...accepting the

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[171] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 29 March 1909.
[172] Phillips Payson O'Brien, *British and American Naval Power: Politics and Policy, 1900-1936* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), p. 63.
[173] Tumblin, "Race, Security, and Colonial Sovereignty," p. 51; Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, ch. 8.
[174] Wrong, "The Attitude of Canada," p. 388.
[175] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, I, p. 150.
[176] LP/C-882/162084-6, Gregory to Laurier, 14 November 1909. See also HBP/M-721, Gregory to Bourassa, 1 March 1910, Smith to Bourassa (copy), 17 June 1909.
[177] ODSP/10, "Canada's Naval Plans and the United States [1910?] (draft)."
[178] Robert Bothwell, "The Canadian Isolationist Tradition," *International Journal* 54:1 (1998-9), pp. 76-87.
[179] Willison, *The New Canada*, p. 18; Wrong, "The Attitude of Canada," p. 395.

crumbs from...Uncle Sam Munroe [sic]."[180] Canada's naval policy, Laurier explained to a sceptical John Ewart, was "simply taken up as a work indispensible in our present condition."[181]

Part of that 'condition' involved the Pacific coast. The Anglo-Japanese alliance, concluded in 1902 and deepened thereafter, combined with Asian immigration, raised the significance of Canada's links across the 'Anglo-Pacific.'[182] "The new situation...in the Far East," George Parkin observed, "gives [the] geographical position of Canada...added significance...the Dominion is almost as closely in touch with Asia as with Europe."[183] Officially, Canada accepted the Anglo-Japanese alliance, but Ontario liberals were sceptical.[184] John Ewart, for instance, impugned the absurdity of Canadian becoming a "battle-ground in a quarrel between the United Kingdom and the United States...in defence of Japan![185] Others, however, were more practical. The Monroe Doctrine, Oscar Skelton wrote:

> would probably lead [the United States] to intervene to prevent a...Japanese occupation of the Dominion...[and] Canada could not look with any greater equanimity on the occupation of the State of Oregon by an Asiatic power, and quite conceivably would decide to help her southern neighbour to the extent of her more limited power.[186]

Skelton further suggested that a Canadian navy, including a "Pacific squadron," could "jointly with the Australasian fleets...undertake the Empire's work in the East."[187] "There is much to be said," W.L. Grant agreed, "between Canada and Australia for a Pacific squadron to guarantee Imperial supremacy in the Pacific."[188] This implied a *de facto* Anglo-Saxon alliance with strategic and racial links across the Pacific, including with the United States. It was possible, therefore, for Ontario liberals to see Canada's Pacific interests in 'British-American' terms, bypassing Britain and the 'North

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[180] ODSP/10, "Canada and Imperial Defence."
[181] LP/C-888, Laurier to Ewart (copy), 15 March 1910, p. 168310
[182] Recent exceptions include Heere, "The British Empire and the Politics of Asian Immigration," pp. 2-5, and Jesse Tumblin, "'Grey Dawn' in the British Pacific: Race, Security, and Colonial Sovereignty on the Eve of World War I," *BW* 9:1 (2016), pp. 32-54.
[183] George Parkin, "Canada and the Pacific," in *The Empire and the Century*, p. 410-11.
[184] Barry Gough, *Canada, Britain, and the North Pacific: Maritime Enterprise and Dominion, 1778-1914* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 138-9.
[185] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, I, p. 310.
[186] ODSP/10, "Canada's Naval Plans and the United States (draft)."
[187] Ibid.
[188] W.L. Grant, "Current Events," *QQ* 20:2 (1910), p. 227.

Atlantic Triangle' altogether. Indeed, while London prioritised the North Sea Skelton noted that "Sydney and Vancouver will sleep more soundly if the allied British states have Pacific fleets[.]"[189] As historian Jesse Tumblin argues, "Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian fleet units" allowed the Pacific Dominions to "advocate for their own regional interests and to contest their colonial subordination to Britain in the diplomatic sphere."[190]

But even as liberals affirmed their 'Britishness' their conceptions of Canadian interests rarely included Britain's 'dependent' empire. While imperial rule was often lauded, the distinction between 'Greater Britain' and the United Kingdom's imperial possessions was fundamental.[191] As W.L.M. King wrote:

> The whole administration of India is not 'British' in the broad sense of the word, but 'United Kingdom' or 'United Kingdom and Ireland'...[this] is true also of...other 'British' possessions...The Embassies and Legations, though styled 'British', are more strictly speaking the embassies of Great Britain and Ireland. There is not, I believe, a single Canadian, Australian, New Zealander or South African connected in any way with the diplomatic service...[or] with one or two exceptions...the army and navy.[192]

Occasionally liberals mused, as King himself did, about the "gradual admission of the self governing Dominions to a share in...the [dependent] Empire."[193] Among liberal imperialists B.E. Walker perhaps went furthest, arguing that "eventually the Dominions will have to assume the full responsibility for India, Egypt and the dependencies."[194] Nevertheless, Walker recognised that, for the foreseeable future, his idea was utterly impractical and that such an admission from imperialists threatened to "risk everything[.]"[195] While talk often arose of a 'Greater British America' that included

[189] O.D. Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 20:1 (1912), p. 109.
[190] Jesse Tumblin, "'Grey Dawn' in the British Pacific: Race, Security, and Colonial Sovereignty on the Eve of World War I," *BW* 9:1 (2016), p. 52.
[191] See for example W.L. Grant, "British Experience in Tropical Colonisation," *QQ* 17:4 (1910), pp. 273-88
[192] WLMKP/C-1910/10596, King to Grey (copy), 1 June 1909.
[193] Ibid.
[194] BWP/29B, Walker to Brand (copy), 1 February 1916.
[195] AMP/44/1-2/36-7, Walker to Milner, 1 April 1916.

Newfoundland and even a customs union with the West Indies, most liberals - though deeply 'British' - recoiled from responsibility for Britain's imperial possessions.[196]

III

Liberals were further repelled by the European 'vortex of militarism.' Canada, John Ewart argued with tragic irony, had no interest in guaranteeing "the integrity of Belgium."[197] Yet notions of a common British race, culture, and political institutions underpinned Anglo-Canadians' determination to defend the United Kingdom, and it was this sense of Britannic nationalism that sanctioned the creation of a Canadian navy.[198] As Skelton put it: "The feeling...has been brought to a head by the recent German scare in Britain, that whether or not Canada need spend millions to protect her shores she must spend them to protect her self-respect."[199] "I regret the necessity [of the navy]," George Wrong wrote in a similar vein, "but it will it will help to cure us of the colonial type of mind."[200]

Though Laurier rejected the naval "enthusiasm now so flamboyant in the City of Toronto," he concluded that action was unavoidable.[201] As he wrote to W.D. Gregory: "We are a nation...and we have to assume the duties and responsibilities of a nation."[202] A Canadian navy, he reasoned, would "be satisfactory to all except mad Imperialists."[203] In the event, 'mad imperialists,' too, were reasonably satisfied.[204] John Willison, who hoped to follow Australia and New Zealand by pledging a Dreadnought to Britain, nonetheless pronounced that, "our permanent contribution to the naval

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[196] See for example Andrew Drummond, "The Federal Union of the British West Indies and Commercial Union with Canada," *QQ* 24:4 (1917), pp. 410-20; Paula Hastings, "Rounding off the Confederation: Geopolitics, Tropicality, and Canada's 'destiny' in the West Indies in the early twentieth century," *JCCH* 14:2 (2013).
[197] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, I, p. 317. See also Wrong, "The Attitude of Canada," p. 394
[198] See especially Mitcham, *Race and Imperial Defence*, ch. 5.
[199] ODSP/10, "Canada's Naval Plans and the United States [1910?] (draft)."
[200] WLMKP/C-1911/12126, Wrong to King, 18 November 1909.
[201] LP/C-875/153918, Laurier to Wrong (copy) 25 March 1909.
[202] LP/C-882/162097-8, Laurier to Gregory (copy), 23 November 1909.
[203] LP/C-875/154085, Laurier to Ewart (copy), 29 March 1909, C-888/168310, Laurier to Ewart (copy), 15 March 1910.
[204] See LP/C-875/154204, Denison to Laurier, 31 March 1909.

strength of the Empire must be an indigenous Canadian navy."[205] This was in line with Alfred Milner, who emphasised that Britain sought, "not tributary States...but fresh centres of strength[.]"[206] Liberal autonomists, moreover, predictably approved Laurier's course. "Those...whose ideal is an alliance of free and equal nations," Skelton recorded, "advocate...a naval unit under Canadian control."[207] John Dafoe likewise endorsed Dominion "fleets in their own ports, under their own management[.]"[208] The exception was W.D. Gregory, who favoured "a cash payment" to Britain on the economical and anti-militarist grounds that "the building of a navy [in Canada] would create a powerful interest to press for further outlay."[209] But for most liberals Canada's navy was a reflection of Britannic nationalism. Even John Ewart, who sympathised "altogether with the no-navy men," acquiesced if: "By the direct order of our King, our navy is to be known as THE ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY."[210]

Of course, Quebec *Nationalistes* led by Henri Bourassa opposed 'Laurier's Navy' as a contribution to "imperialism and militarism."[211] Soon, however, Robert Borden - under political pressure from his Conservative party[212] - claimed that Laurier's policy ignored "the present emergency."[213] He thus echoed Willison's call for "an offer of Dreadnoughts or an immediate cash contribution" to Britain.[214] Subsequent events moved quickly. Between January 1910 and September 1911 the Liberals passed the Naval Service Bill - authorising a Canadian navy; a *Nationaliste* challenger defeated Laurier's candidate in a Quebec by-election - a seismic event in formerly-solid Liberal territory; British Prime Minister H.H. Asquith (1852-1928) affirmed at the 1911 Imperial Conference that Britain could not share its responsibility for foreign policy, while Laurier, backed by

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[205] *TN*, 5 July 1909.
[206] BWP/8/7, Milner to Walker, 12 April 1909. See also WP/29/223/21863-4, Milner to Willison, 8 May 1910; AMP/37/5, Milner to Willison (copy), 8 May 1910.
[207] ODSP/10, "Canada's Naval Plans and the United States (draft)"; LP/C-887/167826, Ewart to Laurier, 4 March 1910.
[208] Dafoe, *Imperial Press Conference*, pp. 9, 14.
[209] LP/C-882/162084-6, Gregory to Laurier, 14 November 1909.
[210] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, I, pp. 153, 160 (emphasis in original).
[211] HBP/M-721, Bourassa to Gregory (copy), 22 February 1910.
[212] Brown, *Borden*, I, pp. 156-63.
[213] WP/5/38/2297, 'Most Confidential [memorandum]', enclosed in Borden to Willison, 19 November 1909.
[214] WP/5/38/2298, Willison to Borden (draft), 22 November 1909

Louis Botha (1862-1919) of South Africa, upheld Dominion autonomy; finally, the Liberals were defeated at the 1911 election by the 'unholy alliance' of Borden's Conservatives and Bourassa's *Nationalistes*.[215] "In Quebec I am attacked as an Imperialist," Laurier lamented, "and in Ontario as an anti-Imperialist."[216]

But in 'Greater Ontario' the navy - overshadowed by reciprocity - hardly featured in the 1911 election.[217] It was only Borden's victory and the introduction of his Naval Aid Bill (1912) that changed the political calculus. Liberal imperialists, led by Toronto Round Tablers, endorsed Borden's plan for an 'emergency' contribution to Britain.[218] A memorandum outlined their agreed position: "...either a cash grant or a contribution of two or more Dreadnoughts...which shall constitute an integral portion of the British navy."[219] Though Borden's unlikely *Nationaliste* allies rebelled,[220] George Wrong wrote excitedly that his policy meant "real participation by this country in Imperial Defence...In Ontario the Liberals will support something really considerable[.]"[221] This was not mere hyperbole. Liberal autonomists, notably John Dafoe and Oscar Skelton, countenanced an 'emergency' contribution if matched by a Dominion fleet. As Dafoe wrote to Laurier, "It would be extremely dangerous politics to take the position that under no circumstances could Canada come to the aid of the Motherland by cash contributions."[222] In fact, he urged Laurier to trump Borden's policy with "two naval units, one [each] for the Atlantic and...Pacific...[and] two dreadnoughts...[In] an emergency, they can be temporarily at the disposal of the motherland until the emergency passes, when they can be recalled, to become the flagships of the Canadian units."[223] Skelton, moreover, conceded that a

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[215] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, pp. 325-383.
[216] Quoted in Ibid., p. 380.
[217] Dutil and Mackenzie, *Canada 1911*, pp. 193-200.
[218] Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, I, p. 158.
[219] RTP/777/34, 'Memorandum,' enclosed in Wrong to Curtis, 27 May 1912.
[220] See RBP/C-4349/67387, Willison to Borden, 17 October 1912; Henri Bourassa, *Why the Navy Act Must Be Repealed: Imperial Problems* (Montreal: Le Devoir, 1913).
[221] GWP/B2003/005/001/28, Wrong to Bryce (copy), 22 May 1912. See also WP/24/176/17393, Kylie to Willison, [November or December] 1912.
[222] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Laurier (copy), 23 September 1912.
[223] Ibid., Dafoe to Laurier (copy), 18 November 1912.

> gift or loan of Dreadnoughts...[preceding] a vigorous Canadian navy programme would find wide support. There are many moderate men who, while not convinced of the reality of the [naval] emergency, and firmly persuaded that the national policy is the only enduring solution, would not object to a gift made out of our prosperity to clean the slate.[224]

This liberal agreement on the navy was apparent in the development of a "Toronto-Winnipeg scheme" drafted by Dafoe, Wrong, and Kylie to "take the question out of [party] politics.'"[225] They called for the Dominion to assist in the "defence of the Empire" through the "a navy that will be worthy of our national aspirations," and were open to an emergency contribution.[226] Indeed, liberal autonomists and imperialists alike believed, as John Willison wrote, that Canada would be "acting of its own motion and...[its] political sovereignty...wholly unaffected[.]"[227] "I do not think that such a contribution," John Dafoe agreed, "need constitute any infringement of Canadian autonomy."[228] Even Laurier admitted that "the principle of autonomy would not apply here."[229] But Henri Bourassa perceived that an 'emergency' contribution, "[i]f followed by further contributions...will raise the old Anglo-Saxon spirit of opposition to contribution without representation."[230] It was here that liberals diverged. Whereas the Round Table endorsed "the representation of Canada in the councils of the Empire in respect to defence," the 'Toronto-Winnipeg' memo was silent on representation.[231] The Round Table view, Dafoe argued, entailed "the complete negation of our whole national development" and a "permanent subordination"[232] that

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[224] Oscar Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 20:4 (1913), pp. 469-70; JDP/M-73, Sifton to Dafoe, 4 January[?] 1913[?].
[225] ASP/4/21, Skelton to Shortt, 7 September 1912; JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Laurier (copy), 23 September 1912.
[226] ODSP/1/1912-13.
[227] RBP/C-4349/67492-3, Willison to Borden (copy), 17 December 1912. See also TNL/BNS/EWMG/1, Willison to Grigg, 1 April 1913.
[228] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Laurier (copy), 23 September 1912.
[229] Ibid., Laurier to Dafoe, 26 September 1912.
[230] HBP/M-721, Bourassa to Gregory (copy), 10 October 1913.
[231] RTP/777/34, 'Memorandum,' enclosed in Wrong to Curtis, 27 May 1912.
[232] CSP/200/158727/2-3, Dafoe to Sifton, 1 March 1913; Oscar Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 20:4 (1913), pp. 469-70; JDP/M-73, Sifton to Dafoe, 4 January[?] 1913[?].

would lead inevitably to "separation from the Empire."[233] Imperialists, Skelton agreed, "pay lip homage to...autonomy while making proposals which make autonomy meaningless."[234]

Wilfrid Laurier, for his part, recognised that if Canadians were consulted over Imperial policy they would be bound by its consequences, and that this would "involve by indirection," as Dafoe put it, "the adoption of that very centralizing system which it had been his purpose to block."[235] On this ground - and in response to considerable political pressure from Bourassa's *Nationalistes* - Laurier convinced the Liberal-dominated Senate to reject Borden's Naval Aid Bill in May 1913. Thus as historian C.P. Stacey quipped, Canada "produced the bitterest of [political] controversies, but no ships."[236] "Sir Wilfrid Laurier has taken an ill-advised course," John Willison wrote to Borden, and "done something to discredit Canada in...the Empire...No doubt from the standpoint of Quebec alone his course is politically advantageous."[237] Of course, there was partisan manoeuvring on both sides.[238] Canadian historians, however, have tended to follow Willison in interpreting Laurier's action primarily in relation to Quebec and domestic party politics.[239] As one scholar wrote, "Laurier was never able to rise above the level of his immediate surroundings...[or] appreciate the interdependence of Canada's destiny as a nation with the survival of the Empire[.]"[240]

Three considerations, however, challenge this view. First was the importance of rural 'Greater Ontario' to the Liberal party, especially from 1910-14, which Laurier knew was hostile to naval armaments.[241] Second was Laurier's Gladstonian liberal opposition to militarism and his genuine revulsion at the European 'war-vortex.' As he frankly told the 1911 Imperial Conference: "All

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[233] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Hawkes (copy), 12 July 1913. See also HBP/M-722, Bourassa to Milner (copy), 10 October 1912; AMP/39/18-20, Bourassa to Milner, 10 October 1912.
[234] ODSP/9, Alliance or Centralization [draft, n.d.].
[235] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 69; JDP/M-73, Laurier to Dafoe, 26 September 1912.
[236] Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, I, p. 161.
[237] RBP/C-4411/130398, Willison to Borden, 12 May 1913. See also Robert Borden, *Comments on the Senate's Rejection of the Naval Aid Bill* (Ottawa: Ottawa Printing Co., 1913); [John Willison], "Canada: The Naval Aid Bill," *The Round Table* 3:12 (1913), pp. 711-19.
[238] Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 20:4 (1913), p. 469; JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Hawkes (copy), 12 July 1913.
[239] See especially Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, pp. 208-10; Neatby, *Laurier*, pp. 182-204, 220-21.
[240] G.L. Cook, "Canada's Relations with Britain, 1911-19: Problems of Imperial Defence and Foreign Policy." Unpublished DPhil thesis, Oxford, 1969, p. 430.
[241] LP/C-908/190435, Laurier to Fielding (copy), 3 February 1913.

the nations of Europe...have gone, if I may say so, mad."[242] And third is the rediscovery by British world historians of the idea of a 'Britannic Alliance.' The Dominions, led by Laurier, thus "proclaimed their loyalty to the Crown and empire...backed up by the strong cultural and racial foundations of Greater Britain," yet at the same time jealously guarded their political autonomy.[243] While many imperialists sought centralised institutions for 'Imperial defence,' the autonomist conception of a 'Britannic Alliance' was in fact the dominant view. Neither Borden nor Laurier, John Willison had to admit, "aims at separation from the Mother Country."[244]

Conclusion

During the 'Laurier era' the key fault line in debates over Canada's external affairs was less between Liberals and Conservatives than liberal autonomists and liberal imperialists. Both sought to entrench a more effective and equitable system of 'Greater British' defence that reflected the Dominion's growing standing in the Empire and the wider world. Indeed, while liberal imperialists advocated a centralised system of Imperial defence with equal representation for the Dominions in London, liberal autonomists upheld a 'Gladstonian' vision of Greater Britain based on Dominion autonomy. This was evident in W.L.M. King's arguments for a Canadian navy, which he claimed would enhance Canada's standing within the British Empire, in relation to the United States, and in "world politics" more generally.[245]

Though imperial questions increasingly bifurcated 'Greater Ontario' liberalism, with imperialists defecting to Borden and autonomists clinging to Laurier, they shared a broad understanding of Britannic nationalism and Canada's distinctly 'British-American' interests. Moreover, it was the growth of Anglo-Saxonist sentiment and the consequent rapprochement between Great Britain and the United States that created the international order wherein Laurier could advance those interests. These included the termination of the Dominion's dependent status

[242] Quoted in Dutil and Mackenzie, *Canada 1911*, p. 142.
[243] Mitcham, *Race and Imperial Defence*, p. 201.
[244] [Willison], "The Naval Aid Bill," p. 716.
[245] WLMKP/C-1918/18960/A-A3, King to Laurier (copy), 3 November 1913.

in international relations, improved ties with the United States, and close association with Great Britain and the other Dominions. But while debates over imperial and international relations were framed in wider British and Anglo-world contexts, so too were more local disputes. In the penultimate chapter, we turn our attention to liberal ideas of 'progress' and political reform.

7

A Better Britain?

"English-speaking people...are the common heirs of British traditions and...workers for the social betterment and the moral progress of mankind."[1]
- John Willison, 1906

"The principle of Liberalism," Wilfrid Laurier told a Quebec City audience in 1877, "is inherent to the very essence of our nature...for it condemns [us] irrevocably to movement, to progress[.]"[2] The idea of 'progress' was central to late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century liberalism. In British settler societies, however, notions of progress were entwined with the conceit that colonials were building 'better Britains' - New World nations that were a sign of, and a contribution to, the advance of British civilisation.[3] Anglo-Canadians, as we saw in chapter two, indulged in a peculiar version of this idea, combining British and American elements in a 'Canada First' idea of Dominion nation-building.

Though historian Damien-Claude Bélanger recently argued that liberal intellectuals equated "democracy, urban and industrial society, mass culture, and secularism - in a word, modernity - [...] with the United States," 'Greater Ontario' liberals' laudation of British institutions and Canada's integration into a dynamic British world economy challenges that position.[4] Indeed, it is striking that Britannic nationalism took its most potent form in Ontario's industrial, financial, and cultural capital, Toronto. 'Britishness,' then, was hardly 'anti-modern.' On the contrary, liberals were struck by an insecure sense that 'British-American' democracy failed to meet an imagined 'British' standard. Entrenched political corruption and patronage appointments were un-British and unprogressive, while industrialisation and urbanisation portended the distinctly modern political afflictions observed across the Anglo-world. Thus a central element of Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal 'consensus' was the Liberal party's association with 'political reform.'[5]

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[1] Willison, *Anglo-Saxon Amity* (Toronto, 1906), p. 3.
[2] Laurier, "On Political Liberalism," p. 61.
[3] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 466-7; Morgan, *Building Better Britains?.*
[4] Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, pp. 6-7.
[5] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 152.

This chapter examines these debates, arguing that - far from rejecting 'Britishness' for American modernity - liberals sought to uphold their vision of Canada as a progressive British and Anglo-Saxon nation. This was apparent in three spheres of debate which this chapter addresses in turn: institutional reform, the construction and operation of the railway, and 'progressive' political reforms in response to industrialisation. As we shall see, when disputes inevitably arose between Laurier and Anglo-Canadian liberals, they had little connection to a supposed continental-imperial dichotomy. Instead, as liberals embraced 'progressivism' and demands for radical reform, Laurier's essential moderation and commitment to 'Gladstonian' liberalism appeared increasingly antiquated and insufficient.

Ontario Reformers

I

Under George Brown Ontario Reformers built their reputation as the party of 'Progress' and 'the People.' The Dominion Liberal party, as the inheritor of the Grit-Reform tradition, retained its reputation for "voluble virtue."[6] This reached a peak after the 1873 Pacific Scandal in which John Macdonald's Conservatives received apparent bribes in exchange for the contract to build the transcontinental railroad.[7] The subsequent Liberal Government (1874-78), though short-lived thanks to the global depression of the 1870s, left an important legacy: "sweeping electoral reforms, including the secret ballot[.]"[8]

But in 1878 Macdonald returned to office with the National Policy where he remained until his death in 1891. During this period Wilfrid Laurier railed against the political corruption that seemed endemic to the 'Macdonald system': "We have had class legislation...over-taxation, and...political corruption - political corruption so bold that it does not even seek...to hide its

[6] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 36.
[7] Richard Gwyn, *Nation Maker: Sir John A. Macdonald: His Life, Our Times, Volume Two: 1867-1891* (Toronto: Random House, 2011), chs. 16-17.
[8] Ibid., p. 264.

shame."[9] Canadian corruption, Goldwin Smith lamented, "is...universal...shameless and...hopeless."[10] Indeed, late-nineteenth-century Canadian politics were blighted by the use of public money and political patronage appointments to secure partisan loyalty in local constituencies.[11] Laurier, however, failed to capitalise on growing public hostility in part because of Unrestricted Reciprocity. In 1891, for example, G.M. Grant "voted for the first time since the Pacific scandal for Sir John Macdonald's government...not because I liked it, but because I disliked more the...policy of the opposition."[12] Grant's concerns, though, were alleviated and the Liberals reaffirmed their opposition to "the gross corruption...of the Conservative party."[13] This reflected John Willison's advice that Laurier "should attack the Senate, the cost of govt [*sic*]...[and] the extravagance and dishonesty in administration."[14] Soon after, Grant assailed Conservative corruption in the Toronto *Globe* with special attention to the Canadian Senate, which epitomised the factionalism and patronage of Dominion politics: "The great objection to our Senate is that it is simply an addition to the bribery fund at the disposal of the Premier...[filled] with men appointed for life simply because they have been faithful party hacks[.]"[15]

Canada's Upper House conspicuously undermined the claim that the Dominion had 'Americanised' British institutions with a strong dose of egalitarian democracy. The framers of Confederation established an institution that satisfied few: they objected to an hereditary chamber, appointments by the provinces, and an elected body that might challenge the Commons. In fact, George Brown opposed an elected Senate because it would diminish provincial rights and involved an 'un-British' departure from Responsible Government.[16] He therefore acquiesced to a deliberately weak Senate with a property qualification and members appointed for life under the Crown's prerogative. The Dominion Senate thus lacked popular legitimacy and became a blatant instrument

[9] Laurier, "Unlimited Commercial Reciprocity," in *Laurier on the Platform*, p. 421.
[10] JBP/16/75-6, Smith to Bryce, 16 April 1892.
[11] English, *Decline of Politics*, pp. 8-11.
[12] Quoted in Grant, *Principal Grant*, p. 360.
[13] *Platform of the Liberal Party of Canada, 1895*, p. 65.
[14] LP/C-738/2209, Willison to Laurier, 4 August 1892
[15] *TG*, 4 November 1893.
[16] Careless, *Brown*, II, p. 166.

of patronage. It was a "faint shadow of the House of Lords," Goldwin Smith mocked, "with its gilded chairs...[and] legislative barrenness."[17] G.M. Grant echoed this view in a letter to Willison, whose editorial criticisms were "not adequate to the...weight of popular odium [and] contempt which is entertained for the Senate!"[18] In this context, Laurier's Liberals attacked the Senate as "inconsistent with the Federal principle...and un-controlled by...public opinion...[It] should be so amended as to bring it into harmony with the principles of popular government."[19]

II

In power, however, Liberal interest in Senate reform waned. Though Laurier complained to Joseph Chamberlain that the Upper House was "lamentably defective" and the source of "intolerable abuses of authority," serious reform proposals required legislation at Westminster.[20] Other issues took precedence and Laurier retreated, admitting to Willison that his course was "too mild for your radical views, but we have done enough for the time being."[21] Willison's response illuminated Ontario liberal opinion. "The Globe's position as respects the Senate," he argued

> is a very difficult one. Ever since a few months after George Brown's death [1880] the Globe has advocated abolition of the Senate. Now that the Liberals are in office and the Senatorships go to Liberals it is hard to take a new position...the Globe could not make the mass of Ontario Liberals satisfied...For myself of course, I do not believe in a second chamber.[22]

The Senate only added to Willison's growing disdain for the factionalism and venality of Canadian politics. "Canadian journalism," he wrote to Laurier, "is a very contemptible affair and Canadian politics no better."[23] But as editor of the Toronto *Globe* he sought to raise Canada's political discourse to what he regarded as the 'British' standard. It was essential, he argued, to "make the journalism of Canada...[a] progressive force in public affairs," and an advocate for "reform

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[17] Smith, *Loyalty, Aristocracy, and Jingoism*, pp., 34, 47.
[18] WP/17/130/12203-4, G.M. Grant to Willison, 6 January 1896
[19] *Platform of the Liberal Party of Canada, 1895*, pp. 5, 7.
[20] LP/C-763/312219-31, Laurier to Chamberlain (copy), 11 February 1899, Chamberlain to Laurier, 10 March 1899.
[21] WP/24/179/17877, Laurier to Willison, 7 January 1899.
[22] LP/C-762/29859-61, Willison to Laurier, 21 January 1899. See also JBP/17/129, Smith to Bryce, 5 September 1908.
[23] LP/C-758/25343, Willison to Laurier, 25 July 1898.

of the conditions which breed monopoly and plutocracy." He further appealed to the "spirit of fair play in Anglo-Saxon peoples" for Canadians to refrain from the "malicious and unworthy pursuit" of factionalism. The Canadian press, Willison observed, "conducts political debate upon perhaps a higher level than...the United States, but...distinctly below the standard which prevails in Great Britain." Canadian newspapers required political independence and intellectual courage to uphold "British freedom...free institutions and...moral progress."[24]

As historian Richard Clippingdale explains, Laurier's tepid approach to the Senate, a series of Liberal election scandals, and increasingly antagonistic relations between the *Globe* and the Liberal parliamentary caucus undermined Willison's partisan allegiance.[25] He outlined his concerns to Clifford Sifton:

> The complaint, I believe, is that the Globe...does not deal as savagely as it should with Conservative politicians...[but] the Globe gives five columns to Liberal speakers for every column it gives to Conservative speakers, and...this is hardly what a newspaper ought to do...Every British or American paper of any consequence entirely excludes partisanship from its news columns...The idea of a great newspaper suppressing the speeches of its political opponents is to me so absurd and stupid that it is simply not worth discussion.[26]

Thus when Willison left the *Globe* in 1902-3 he was motivated by the prospect of journalistic independence. The demands of partisan politics - particularly defending Liberal compromises in government - offended his growing Idealism and Britannic nationalism. His new venture, the Toronto *News*, was to be "an independent journal" financed by Toronto business magnate Sir Joseph Flavelle.[27] Notably, Willison received encouragement from Goldwin Smith and George Parkin, who regarded independent journalism as essential to Canada's political development.[28] "Willison," Smith commented to W.D. Gregory, "is a very good man, and, from all I can learn, Flavelle's object is patriotic."[29]

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[24] Willison, *Journalism*, pp. 6-7, 12-13.
[25] Clippingdale, *Willison*, pp. 157-63.
[26] CSP/C-530/91207, Willison to Sifton, 29 January 1901; WP/37/286/27440, Willison to Sifton (copy), 29 January 1901.
[27] JFP/1/1902, Flavelle to Willison, 27 November 1902.
[28] WP/32/243/24138-9, Parkin to Willison, 11 December 1902, 38/293/28236, Smith to Willison, 20 January 1903.
[29] WDGP/2/1902/M-Z, Smith to Gregory, 25 December 1902.

Laurier, of course, regretted Willison's departure, while Willison assured the Prime Minister that "the theory that I have turned Tory is absurd."[30] Yet by 1904 the two men were increasingly at odds, particularly over the Liberals' tepid progress on patronage reforms. As one of Willison's last *Globe* editorials read:

> The baser sort in both parties are equally capable of buying votes...the real enemy is not the Grit or the Tory, but the corruptionist. Between the two parties, the heavier obligation lies on the Reformer. He has made himself champion of...government by the people. When...a Liberal is guilty of any of the practices to which we have referred he is...a traitor to Liberalism and free institutions.[31]

On this basis the *News* earned the approval of political economist Adam Shortt for being "quite up to the tone and standard of the British press, whose better papers represent my practical ideal of journalism."[32] This was significant as Willison and Shortt became leading advocates for reform of the Dominion Civil Service - like Senate reform, a seemingly mundane subject at the heart of Canada's system of political patronage. As Clifford Sifton once crowed to Willison: "[I] fired a Tory whenever I wanted to and never explained or apologized."[33] But as Willison told the Empire Club of Toronto, "Civil Service Reform" meant

> that appointments...and promotions therein shall be determined by competitive examinations...It is recommended as a vast improvement over the system of appointments by patronage committees and...partisan pressure...[N]o country in the world reposes such a vast patronage in the hands of its Government as does this Confederation...reform of the Senate should go hand in hand with reform of the Civil Service.[34]

Adam Shortt, for his part, hailed Willison's "courageous" campaign. "Such independent...treatment," he lamented, was "unfortunately rare."[35] However, it was not until 1908 - after an investigation condemned political interference in the Civil Service - that Wilfrid Laurier belatedly addressed the problem.[36] He then established a Civil Service Commission and recruited Shortt from Queen's

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[30] LP/C-802/75005, Willison to Laurier, 11 July 1903; WP/24/179/18001, Laurier to Willison, 26 June 1903.
[31] *TG*, 19 November 1902. See Clippingdale, *Willison*, pp. 172-5.
[32] WP/37/285/27335, Shortt to Willison, 3 October 1904,;
[33] WP/37/286/27447, Sifton to Willison, 7 February 1901. See also Skelton, *Laurier*, II, pp. 269-73.
[34] John Willison, "Civil Service Reform in Canada," *The Empire Club of Canada: Addresses* (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter, 1910), pp. 126, 128-9.
[35] WP/37/285/27338, Shortt to Willison, 10 January 1905.
[36] RJP/ICS/A/1908/July-Dec, King to Jebb, 2 November [?] 1908.

University to oversee its reforms.[37] Shortt, Willison noted, was "peculiarly qualified" for the work, and liberals widely lauded the move.[38]

Two points, however, are worth emphasising. First, that the impetus to reform combined indignation at corruption with the rise of political economy - a 'progressive' academic discipline that furnished a cadre of technocratic administrators who valued 'efficiency' in government.[39] Among Ontario liberals, Shortt and especially Oscar Skelton were leading examples of the latter. In a 1912 article Skelton lauded "efficiency in the Civil Service" and noted that Laurier's belated action was an important step in "eliminating party patronage."[40] Shortt similarly promoted "efficiency and the recognition of merit,"[41] to reduce the opportunities for politicians to gain power by local corruption.[42] Second, it is clear that Ontario liberal reformers sought to uphold British standards of government. Indeed, Willison argued for the "adoption of the British system in its integrity," implying that Canada's corrupt patronage system was 'un-British.'[43] The key aim of Civil Service reform, Shortt later wrote to W.L. Grant, was "to get the system back to a simple, solid, understandable basis on the British model instead of on the...trashy American model and to do that without permitting the reactionaries to secure the abolition of the whole system and restore primitive patronage."[44] Though historian Barry Ferguson contended that Shortt's appeal to British practices was ironic, "given his constitutional position calling for autonomy from Great Britain," this conflated Britishness with imperialism.[45] Like other liberals, Shortt viewed Canada as a 'British-American' nation distinguished by British institutions and membership of Greater Britain.[46] In this respect, the campaign for Civil Service reform was an assertion of Britannic nationalism. Political

[37] ODSP/1, Shortt to Skelton, 28 August 1908.
[38] RJP/1909/Jan-Sept, Willison to Jebb, 23 March 1909. See also ASP/702, Ewart to Shortt, 27 March 1908, Skelton to Shortt, 31 August 1908; Ferguson, *Remaking Liberalism*, pp. 125-35; Doug Owram, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State, 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 68-73.
[39] Owram, *The Government Generation*, pp. 41-62.
[40] O.D. Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 20:1 (1912), p. 105.
[41] ASP/702, Shortt to Warburton (copy), 4 January 1918, Shortt to Wrong (copy), 15 February 1918.
[42] Shortt, "Branches of the Canadian Government," p. 192.
[43] Ibid., p. 126.
[44] WLGP/9, Shortt to Grant, 16 March 1923.
[45] Ferguson, *Remaking Liberalism*, p. 134.
[46] See for example, Shortt, "Branches of the Canadian Government," pp. 181-96.

patronage and corruption was unbefitting the 'British' nationality and institutions to which Ontario liberals laid claim.

III

But while Shortt made progress on Civil Service reform, the Senate was seemingly un-reformable. This was in stark contrast to Britain, where the Parliament Act (1911) curtailed the power of the House of Lords, as well as the United States, which ratified the Seventeenth Amendment (1913) to directly elect Senators. In Canada, however, the now-Liberal dominated Senate, as noted above, scuppered Robert Borden's Naval Aid Bill in 1913, briefly reanimating the question of reform. The "abolition of the present Upper Chamber and the substitution on an elected Senate," Borden wrote to Willison, "would probably meet with the approval of a great majority of the Canadian people."[47] Willison, who previously favoured abolition and was under consideration by Borden for an appointment, agreed that while there was "something to be said against an elective Senate...in light of our recent experience...[supporting] an elective Senate is to take a very strong strategic position."[48]

At the same time, younger liberals were influenced by British and American reforms. Oscar Skelton in particular lauded David Lloyd George (1863-1945) as a "product of Welsh democracy" and cheered his campaign against the Lords. "The whole constitutional system of Great Britain [has] been profoundly transformed," he noted approvingly.[49] Nor had Americans "before in their history been so active in overhauling their political institutions," including the "popular election of senators."[50] Yet in Canada, Skelton fumed, "blind tradition" sustained the appointed Upper House.[51] He thus urged Wilfrid Laurier re-embrace the cause of reform: "The Federal Senate has...become...an instrument of party patronage and a stronghold of plutocratic privilege. We

[47] WP/4/32/2359, Memorandum enclosed in Borden to Willison, 8 May 1913.
[48] RBP/C-4411/130398, Willison to Borden, 12 May 1913.
[49] ODSP/10, "The Lloyd George Budget," [1910], 9, "British Party Politics," [1912?].
[50] ODSP/9, "American Political Tendencies," [n.d.].
[51] Oscar Skelton, "The Referendum," *UM* 12 (April 1913), p. 203.

demand its complete abolition OR: We demand the election of senators by popular vote, in rotation and for a limited term."[52]

More generally, patronage and corruption remained a problem under Borden.[53] As Willison later admitted, "The vices of offices have been as plainly revealed in one party as in the other."[54] Nonetheless, he regarded Borden's Government as an improvement. Writing to George Wrong, Willison claimed:

> [I]n 1896 I was trusting, hopeful and enthusiastic...[but] Ministers took tall from public contracts. Public money was used shamefully and brazenly to corrupt constituencies...I was inside and I know...I have been inside both parties. Neither is perfect. But we who denounced Sir John Macdonald as the chief of corruptionists...found our leaders...showing open contempt for the fools who thought the professions of opposition should be regarded in office.[55]

Though Laurier was "personally incorrupt," both Willison and Goldwin Smith impugned his apparent unwillingness to censure his partisans.[56] Other liberals, though, doubted that Borden was any better. The Conservatives, John Dafoe maintained, "made a bluff of being radical when in opposition," but were in fact the "party of the interests and of privilege."[57] This was, perhaps, to be expected from Dafoe as a representative of Western Canadian liberalism. But George Wrong equally deplored the "crying evil" of patronage and Canada's failure to meet 'Anglo-Saxon' expectations.[58] At least one Conservative minister, he wrote to Borden

> would be regarded as ineligible for a Cabinet position in England...[and] in the...United States. It seems therefore that we must be content to accept in Canada lower standards...Is it really true that a code of honour must prevail here which is on a lower level than that of other countries of the Anglo-Saxon race?[59]

Wrong's assessment of Canadian politics was certainly bleak. "I am disappointed as to the supposed higher plane of English politics," he confided to Willison, but "I do think the English have

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[52] LP/C-918/201871, 'Suggestions for Farmers' Platform,' enclosed in Skelton to Laurier, 18 November 1918.
[53] English, *Decline of Politics*, pp. 72-7.
[54] Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 274-5.
[55] GWP/B2003-005/005/3/78, Willison to Wrong, 24 October 1913 (emphasis in original).
[56] JBP/17/44, Smith to Bryce, 10 April 1905.
[57] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Laurier (copy), 18 November 1912.
[58] CSP/C-594/160778, Wrong to Sifton, 31 May 1915; GWP/B2003-005/004/4/13, Wrong to Sifton (copy), 31 May 1915.
[59] GWP/B2003-005/001/22a, Wrong to Borden (copy), 20 October 1911.

got rid of the gross type of corruption that we have here."[60] Despite a purportedly superior constitution Canada's politics failed to meet an imagined 'British' standard. "There is no doubt that Canada is corrupt," Wrong reiterated to James Bryce in 1914, "more corrupt I fear, than any other self governing part of the British Empire."[61] Canadian democracy, Bryce agreed, was blighted by "jobbery in...public works...bribery at elections...political influence on appointments [and] want of dignity in public life." While he added that Canada's flaws were "not very serious compared with...the U.S.A," this was faint praise for an ostensibly 'better Britain.'[62]

Railways and Nation-Building

I

The 1873 Pacific Scandal reinforced the view among liberals that railways were the main source of corruption in Canadian politics. Unlike the Civil Service or the Senate, railway construction involved enormous private expenditures backed by public credit, and railways were evocative symbols of the Dominion itself. Indeed, the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1885 illustrated how 'better Britonism' was entwined with faith in the power of industry to compress space and time, as well as a Whiggish confidence in British imperial development.[63] But railway politics also raised broader questions over the government's role in economic nation-building.[64] Though John Willison ultimately concluded that "history will justify the original contract with the Canadian Pacific syndicate," neither he nor his liberal contemporaries were not always so confident.[65]

In the 1880s, Canadian liberals were wary of what historian James Belich called "the bottomless pit of Canadian rail-making."[66] Tory corruption, opposition to the 'Macdonald system,'

[60] WP/50/344/36349, Wrong to Willison, 28 October 1913.
[61] JBP/155/155, Wrong to Bryce, 26 November 1914.
[62] GWP/B2003-005/001/28, Bryce to Wrong, 11 November 1916.
[63] Bell, "Dissolving Distance," pp. 523-62.
[64] A.A. den Otter, *The Philosophy of Railway The Transcontinental Railway in British North America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 158-207.
[65] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 291.
[66] Belich, *Replenishing*, p. 414.

and an ideological predilection for limited government underpinned their criticisms of the CPR. Favoured corporations, liberals argued, reaped profits while the public bore the costs and the risks.[67] This was not only corrupt and illiberal - it was 'un-British.' As Wilfrid Laurier told Parliament in 1880:

> If [the government is] desirous of securing British institutions, they must introduce into the legislation of this country the broad spirit of modern England, and not seek to establish these monopolies...If this [CPR] contract is to be judged in the light of modern British ideas and principles, it carries with it its death-warrant.[68]

Instead, Laurier espoused the 'Gladstonian' view that limited government intervention would minimise the financial waste and political corruption that chartered monopolies invariably produced. As Goldwin Smith put it: "[W]hat corruption can be more pestilential...to the commonwealth than the surrender of the commercial policy of the country to private interests, in return for their...money in elections?"[69]

But after Laurier's 1891 defeat to Macdonald and his CPR allies - "the Tory party on wheels"[70] - the Liberals tempered their position. This was evident in 1896-7 when the Government debated a proposal to build a CPR branch through the Crowsnest Pass into mineral-rich Kootenay, British Columbia. The proposal was supported by a Toronto-based conglomerate, including the President of the Bank of Commerce and newly-minted Liberal Senator George Cox (1840-1914) and the *Globe*'s Managing Director Robert Jaffray (1832-1914). The revelation of their investments in Kootenay's coal deposits proved embarrassing to John Willison, who endorsed the route on nationalist grounds.[71] G.M. Grant sagely warned that "I do not think that the policy of building branches to the C.P.R. is one that should commend itself...[The Tories] patented that policy, but it always seemed to me outrageous."[72] Laurier, however, faced serious political pressure - both from

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[67] A.A. Den Otter, *Civilizing the West: The Galts and the Development of Western Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986), p. 108.
[68] Wilfrid Laurier, "The Construction of the Pacific: Criticism of the contract entered into with the syndicate (Speech made in English by Hon. W. Laurier, in the House of Commons, at its sitting of the 21st December, 1880)," in *Laurier on the Platform*, p. 139.
[69] Smith, *Canadian Question*, p. 224.
[70] Pennington, *The Destiny of Canada*, p. 219.
[71] CSP/C-469/24214-5, Willison to Sifton, 4 March 1897; Clippingdale, *Willison*, pp. 151-3.
[72] WP/17/130/12210-11, G.M. Grant to Willison, 23 November 1896.

Clifford Sifton and the Liberal plutocracy - to approve the line.[73] As Sifton wrote: "The country has now an opportunity...of developing itself and getting population...small ideas...of trying to cut off expenditure on public works and railways will have to be dropped."[74] Laurier's solution was a settlement whereby the Dominion subsidised the line in exchange for a series of concessions.[75] This met the approval of both Sifton and Grant and illustrated the ideological compromises necessary in government.[76] "The Canadian Railway," Goldwin Smith sneered, "came round to the Liberal Party here the moment power changed hands."[77]

But government support for private companies remained unpopular among Ontario liberals, and following the agreement Willison had an especial incentive to prove his political independence.[78] In this context, he produced a well-received pamphlet advocating the establishment of a Railway Commission to regulate the industry.[79] The American experience, he argued, proved the folly of subsidising unprofitable and redundant railroads and the threat of corruption that such policies entailed. Aside from "strictly colonization roads," the government should "leave the construction of railways to private enterprise...and relieve the lobby of parliament of the intrusive presence of...railway promoters."[80] Future extensions to the CPR, Willison wrote to Sifton, should be built only "on condition of [their] surrender of monopoly privileges."[81]

Willison, then, believed that railroads were critical pieces of nation-building infrastructure, but that corporate monopolies and state-subsidised competition equally produced inefficiency and corruption. Perhaps, he mused, the Liberals could "leave railway subsidies to the provinces and return to the old Liberal policy."[82] The advantage of this 'provincial rights' approach, he wrote to

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[73] LP/C-748/14029-32, Sifton to Laurier, 19 April 1897.
[74] WP/37/286/27404-6, Sifton to Willison, 16 May 1899.
[75] Hall, *Sifton*, I, pp. 151-8.
[76] WP/17/130/12212, G.M. Grant to Willison, 8 March 1897.
[77] GSP/M-2188, Smith to J.H. Wilson (copy), 1 September 1897.
[78] Clippingdale, *Willison*, pp. 154-6.
[79] Notably, B.E. Walker lauded Willison's "remarkably fair and most admirable statement of...[the] question." WP/46/319/34026, Walker to Willison, 17 May 1897.
[80] Ibid., p. 9.
[81] CSP/C-469/24214, Willison to Sifton, 4 March 1897.
[82] CSP/C-497/55732, Willison to Sifton, 14 May 1899.

Laurier, was the deep unpopularity of federal railway subsidies in Ontario.[83] Regardless, Canadians' inability to construct public works without degenerating into corruption undermined their claim to 'better Britishness.' It was impossible to avoid the conclusion, Willison wrote, that with the construction of the CPR Canadians

> were stampeded into an enterprise that was well nigh beyond our strength, and upon terms that were hardly less than a criminal surrender of the future of the country to the lordship of a corporation. For the moment we may heap adjectives upon the 'national highway'...but...the judgment of the next generation will be that the agreement...was the most insane bargain ever entered into by a free people.[84]

II

After 1900 liberals entertained increasingly radical ideas to counter perceived railroad extravagance and corruption. These included government regulation and ownership - a marked change from the late-nineteenth-century when liberals were leading critics of government intervention.[85] This flowed from two related factors. The first was growing hostility to public subsidies for private corporations. Adam Shortt, for example, condemned "any wasteful line of subsidising on which the Government may enter,"[86] while John Dafoe noted a "good deal of feeling throughout the country against any further aid to railways."[87] Second, Canadian liberals were enmeshed in the development of new interventionist conceptions of liberalism, or 'progressivism' across the Anglo-world.[88] As Ontario industrialised they began to equate government intervention with efficiency, modernisation, and economic progress.[89]

The political impact of these changes was apparent in John Willison's estrangement from Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal party. But it was not Laurier's views that substantially evolved. Rather

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[83] LP/C-772/41023-4, Willison to Laurier, 11 January 1900.
[84] Willison, *The Railway Question in Canada*, pp. 24-5.
[85] den Otter, *The Philosophy of Railways*, pp. 237.
[86] WP/37/285/27307, Shortt to Willison, 6 April 1903.
[87] CSP/140/111898/6, Dafoe to Sifton, 18 February 1903.
[88] Ferguson, *Remaking Liberalism*, pp. 11-42; Owram, *The Government Generation*, pp. 3-28. See also Peter Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Michael Freeden, *The New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986 [1978]); David Gutzke, "Progressivism in Britain and Abroad," in David Gutzke (ed.), *Britain and Transnational Progressivism* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 23-64.
[89] Skelton, "General Economic History of the Dominion," p. 265.

in 1896 Willison recorded that "the more I consider Government construction [of railways] the less I can see in favour of such a policy from the standpoint of the Dominion."[90] By 1902-3 he revisited the question in the context of Liberal Senator George Cox's proposal to extend the Grand Trunk railway to the Pacific.[91] In principle, Willison endorsed the extension, though he now argued that, "My own view leans a good deal to Government railways...[although] no Government is likely as yet to make government construction and operation...its general policy."[92] The Grand Trunk extension, however, was no mere railway. Indeed, upon its construction hinged the development of 'Greater Ontario' and Laurier's relations with the Toronto Liberal plutocracy. Western farmers, who resented the high freight rates that resulted from the CPR's monopoly, were allied with Toronto financiers in wishing "to see a competitor to the Montreal-aligned CPR."[93] Here, then, was an opportunity for Laurier to cement both ends of his 'Greater Ontario' coalition, and on 30 July 1903 he announced the Liberal plan "for the construction of a National Transcontinental Railway."[94] In brief: "The government would construct a line from Moncton, [New Brunswick] to Winnipeg and lease it to the 'Grand Trunk Pacific' [GTP] for fifty years; and the GTP would build from Winnipeg to the Pacific with government aid, mainly in bond guarantees."[95] The plan satisfied Toronto Liberals and, as John Dafoe commented, was sure to "prove a winning card in the West[.]"[96]

Willison was initially supportive, especially of the government's ownership stake, the establishment of a Railway Commission, and financing primarily through bond guarantees rather than direct subsidies.[97] But he was quickly swayed by Robert Borden's response in favour of public ownership - an idea supported by Willison's patron, Joseph Flavelle.[98] Writing to Laurier in 1904 Willison confessed his support for a "national system" that would "strike the imagination of the

[90] CSP/C-46924214, Willison to Sifton, 4 March 1897.
[91] LP/C-796/67896-8, Cox [et al] to Laurier, 3 November 1902.
[92] LP/C-796/67861, Willison to Laurier, 2 November 1902.
[93] Dilley, *Finance, Politics, and Imperialism*, p. 127.
[94] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 30 July 1903.
[95] Clippingdale, *Willison*, pp, 203-4.
[96] CSP/140/111898/26, Dafoe to Sifton, 3 August 1903.
[97] Clippingdale, *Willison*, p. 204.
[98] JFP/1/1903/1088-96, Flavelle to Borden (copy), 16 August 1903; Brown, *Borden*, I, pp. 66-71.

country." Most significant, he asserted that "a progressive and resourceful Government ought to...take just as effective [action]...as any private corporation."[99] Laurier demurred. "I am sorry to say," the Prime Minister replied

> that my views are absolutely at variance with your own...Government ownership is quite feasible in Australia, where there are not rival lines to compete with...But on this continent...a Government railway, having to compete with lines in the hands of private companies...is bound to be a heavy loser.[100]

At the 1904 election Laurier defended his plan across Ontario, and the result was an "overwhelming Liberal victory...the prairies [went] predominantly Liberal," while Ontario gave "seven seats fewer" to the Conservatives than in 1900. As Oscar Skelton wrote: "The unquestioned prosperity...[and] the glowing prospects opened up by the construction of the new transcontinental...received the emphatic endorsement of the country."[101]

III

Nonetheless, liberals remained divided over the government's role in Dominion nation-building and the national economy. Anglo-Canadians broadly agreed that an additional transcontinental railway was necessary to consolidate the Dominion and facilitate western development, though they disagreed over the means to that end. Laurier, for his part, continued to oppose government railways. "I must tell you frankly," he wrote to a correspondent, "that...with my strong convictions, borrowed from the English Liberal school of politics, I am not much in favour of the growing view of substituting collectivism to individualism in the relations of the Government with the people. Government operation of national public utilities does not appeal to me[.]"[102] "Sir Wilfrid," John

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[99] LP/C-808/81683-4, Willison to Laurier, 27 January 1904, C-812/86548-52, 86749-51, Willison to Laurier, 9 and 14 June 1904; WP/24/179/18051, Willison to Laurier (copy), 9 June 1904.
[100] WP/24/179/18037-8, Laurier to Willison, 29 January1904; LP/C-808/81697-8, Laurier to Willison (copy), 29 January 1904.
[101] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, pp. 216, 218-19.
[102] LP/C-897/178634, Laurier to D.B. Wood, 24 December 1910.

Dafoe confirmed, was "quite strongly against the general principle of Government ownership of railways."[103]

Indeed, "National Railways"[104] were controversial and untested, though they seemed to commend themselves compared to what Adam Shortt indicted as the predictable tendency of private companies to "[call] upon the Government to...rescue...stranded railroads."[105] In this context, liberal support for government intervention gained ground. As Oscar Skelton observed: "New burdens have been thrown on government by the increasing complexity of our industrial organization...the only alternatives are government ownership or government regulation."[106] In the Prairie West, John Dafoe added, "the idea of government ownership of [rail]roads...shows signs of developing into a craze[.]"[107] Dafoe sought to split the difference, arguing that uneconomical but strategically important railways, including the West's favoured Hudson Bay line, could be "built and operated by the Government."[108] In general, however, he saw "very considerable danger" in "[g]overnment ownership and operation outright."[109] Even Skelton admitted that 'government by commission' was foreign to "British parliamentary tradition" and potentially un-democratic.[110]

Clearly, though, Willison's 1897 complaint over railway companies' corrupt access to government remained valid. W.L.M. King, appointed Laurier's Minister of Labour in 1909, conceded that Canadians "suffer more at the moment from railway corporation influence than any other."[111] When Robert Borden replaced Laurier as Prime Minister in 1911 he inherited the seemingly intractable problem. "Unless these huge railway corporations are restrained from [political] interference," he wrote to Willison, "I see no limit to the unfortunate results which may ensue."[112]

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[103] CSP/193/154612/74-5, Dafoe to Sifton, 5 September 1910.
[104] See for example, WP/50/344/36326, Wrong to Willison, 26 November 1904.
[105] Adam Shortt, "Railway Construction and National Prosperity," *Proceedings and transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* 3:8 (1914), pp. 295, 307.
[106] O.D. Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 16:3 (1909), p. 290.
[107] CSP/140/111898/4-6, Dafoe to Sifton, 18 February 1903.
[108] CSP/193/154612-71, Dafoe to Sifton, 16 August 1910.
[109] CSP/205/161401/24, Dafoe to Sifton, 4 June 1917.
[110] Skelton, "Current Events," pp. 290-91.
[111] RJP/ICS116/A/1908/July-Dec, King to Jebb, 2 November 1908.
[112] WP/4/32/2289, Borden to Willison, 20 March 1909.

Willison, though, strongly endorsed the nation-building character of railway nationalisation. "Is it out of the question," he asked the new Premier, for the government to "acquire a national railway across the continent...which for all time we could call 'The Macdonald Highway'?"[113] For Willison, government ownership had become a 'progressive' idea, a means to Dominion nation-building, and even the logical conclusion of the neo-mercantilist National Policy.

But it was the Great War that prompted Borden to nationalise the bankrupt Grand Trunk Pacific and Canadian Northern railways in the name of wartime efficiency.[114] Indeed, the 'bust' of the 'Laurier boom' in 1913 exposed the Dominion's over-expansion in railways and debt.[115] Crucially, however, public ownership appealed to both agrarian radicals and Toronto liberals - plainly illustrating the disintegration of Laurier's 'consensus' and the decline of Gladstonian economics.[116] The Liberal railway policy, John Dafoe concluded in light of the bankruptcies, "or rather lack of policy," had been a "disaster." The "period of marked national expansion gave rise to all manner of railway ambitions...and Laurier...[failed] to fit them into a general...scheme of development."[117] Two points, though, might be noted in Laurier's favour; namely, that his 1880s criticism of government intervention was prescient, and that had he failed to modify his policy it is doubtful that the Liberal Government would have survived. Yet as Dafoe's critique illustrated, Laurier's scepticism towards industrial and economic planning looked increasingly anachronistic. From the 1900s 'Greater Ontario' liberals embraced the progressive ideologies that were ascendant across the Anglo-world, not least in Britain itself. Liberals who once opposed government intervention now believed that the State could alleviate social and economic tensions. In an increasingly 'progressive' age, Laurier was part of a beleaguered 'Gladstonian' minority.

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[113] WP/4/32/2370, Willison to Borden (draft), 28 October 1913.
[114] O.D. Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 22:1 (1914), pp. 102-11.
[115] Dilley, *Finance, Politics, and Imperialism*, pp. 131-2.
[116] See for example: B.E. Walker, "East and West," in *The New Era in Canada*, pp. 144-5; RBP/C-4311/32891-3, Flavelle to Borden, 28 June 1915; WP/15/114/10233-5, [Flavelle] to Borden (copy), 28 June 1915; Paul Sharp, *The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada: A Survey Showing American Parallels* (Regina, SK: University of Regina, 1997), pp. 85-6.
[117] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 130.

Progressivism, Industrialisation, and Democracy

I

The rise of progressivism - or 'new' liberalism - in Britain and the United States reflected concerns that industrialisation and urbanisation produced plutocracy and moral degradation.[118] Indeed, part of the appeal of colonial 'Better British' ideologies, as Belich notes, was "the idea that Old Britons were degenerating due to the...unhealthy miasmas of excessive industrialization and urbanization."[119] But during the 'Laurier boom' these symptoms arrived in Canada, threatening the rural and egalitarian political culture that underpinned Ontario liberalism. Between 1891-1921 Ontario's population mushroomed from roughly 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 - with most of the growth occurring after 1901. Toronto alone exploded from 181,000 to 522,000 people over the same period, and by 1911 the province's population was primarily urban.[120]

Liberal intellectuals struggled to absorb the transformation.[121] By 1893 it was clear to Goldwin Smith that the "social and industrial revolution" meant that the "question, What is the government to be, once more, presents itself."[122] In Britain and the United States, Smith saw the emergence of labour politics and socialist ideology.[123] While he upheld radical liberalism, others - including G.M. Grant and Adam Shortt - drew upon British Idealism to critique the pursuit of "mere wealth."[124] Idealism's conception of an 'organic' society was especially pertinent as industrialisation weakened traditional social structures.[125] As G.M. Grant observed in 1902: "What threatens the life of Canada most seriously? [...] the vulgar and insolent materialism of thought and life...an aggressive commercialism...corruption...haste to be rich; [and] mutual distrust...between employers and

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[118] Gutzke (ed.), *Britain and Transnational Progressivism*; Marc Stears, *Progressives, Pluralists, and the Problems of the State: Ideologies of Reform in the United States and Britain, 1909-1926* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[119] Belich, *Replenishing*, p. 467.
[120] Bothwell, *Ontario*, pp. 98-9, 120.
[121] See especially Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Owram, *The Government Generation* ch. 1.
[122] Goldwin Smith, "Social and Industrial Revolution," in *Essays on Questions of the Day: Social and Political* (London: Macmillan, 1893), p. 10.
[123] Ibid.," pp. 2-5, 11.
[124] Adam Shortt, *The Evolution of the Relation between Capital and Labor* (Kingston, 1889), p. 160. See also Grant, "Our National Objects and Aims," pp. 19-20; Owram, *The Government Generation*, p. 7-8.
[125] Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, pp.11-15; Freeden, *The New Liberalism*, pp. 16-19;

employed...Wealth may ruin but it cannot save a nation."[126] This apparent moral decline caused liberals to fear that the Dominion was following the blighted path of Britain and the United States.[127] W.L. Grant worried that Canadian cities would "reproduce the overcrowding of the London slums,"[128] while W.L.M. King lamented the rapid "decline of the rural population in Ontario."[129] Though some intellectuals - led by the elder Grant and a new generation of 'Social Gospellers' - hoped for a regeneration of Christianity and protestant morality, liberals looked increasingly to secular rather than religious salvation.[130]

II

Against this backdrop Ontario liberals drew upon the language and ideology of progressivism and looked to the comparatively advanced progressive movements in Britain, Australasia, and the United States. The latter provided an easy and reassuring comparison. Canada's industrialisation lagged behind the United States, but liberal intellectuals often explained the Dominion's comparative stability in terms of British institutions. "It will be admitted," John Willison wrote, "that Canada has enjoyed comparative freedom from the corporate abuses and financial malpractices...in the United States...One explanation...lies, perhaps, in the political system."[131] Americans, Willison argued, harboured "a deep-seated feeling that class government exists under the forms of democracy...To multitudes exasperated by the excesses of lawless finance [William Jennings] Bryan became a saviour and [Theodore] Roosevelt, who reaped from Bryan's sowing, the prophet of the American

[126] Grant, "Thanksgiving and Retrospect," pp. 231-2.
[127] See for example Kenneth McNaught, *A Prophet in Politics: A Biography of J.S. Woodsworth* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), chapter 2.
[128] WLMKP/C-1912/12928, W.L. Grant to King, 6 February 1910.
[129] WLMKP/C-1921/22352, King to Skelton (copy), 23 February 1914..
[130] Cook, *The Regenerators*, ch. 12. See also Richard Allen, "The Social Gospel and the Reform Tradition in Canada, 1890-1928," *CHR* 49:4 (1968), pp. 381-99.
[131] Willison, *The New Canada*, p. 102.

people."[132] In Canada, conversely, the "British system of government" effectively accommodated the "Radical minority."[133]

Nonetheless, Willison recognised that the Dominion Government catered too much to manufacturers - an ironic admission given his post-1900 support for protectionism. By 1917 they had "developed all the selfishness and arrogance of a privileged class, [and] must have less power at Ottawa in the future."[134] Other, particularly younger, liberals expressed vocal support for American progressives. Oscar Skelton was especially sympathetic to their economic and democratic radicalism, and observed that "Canada's days of ultra-conservatism seem numbered."[135] Significantly, however, he favoured American political reforms because they entailed greater centralisation and efficiency, more nearly approximating the superior British parliamentary system.[136] For Willison as well as Skelton, American progressivism both encouraged Canadian reforms and demonstrated the superiority of British institutions. As ever, then, the American Republic provided both an example to emulate and a model to avoid. Indeed, Skelton and W.L.M. King were among the Anglo-Canadian intellectuals whose progressivism was nurtured at American universities.[137] Even Willison lauded such institutions, which represented the "high ideals...myriad agencies for human betterment...[and] moral balance of American civilization" too often ignored by critics of America's "rampant materialism."[138]

But Greater Britain - with its common citizenship and institutions - provided especially illuminating comparisons. The labour-oriented politics of the Antipodean Dominions, for instance, though lauded by "the New [British] Liberalism,"[139] seemed ill-suited to Canada's liberal individualist

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[132] Ibid., pp. 103-4.
[133] Ibid., pp. 110-11.
[134] RBP/C-4319/40550, Willison to Borden, 23 July 1917.
[135] O.D. Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 15:1 (1907), p. 68.
[136] ODSP/9, American Political Tendencies [n.d.]; O.D Skelton," Current Events," *QQ* 15:1 (1907), p. 76; Oscar Skelton, *Socialism: A Critical Analysis* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), p. 309.
[137] Another was Stephen Leacock. See especially Stephen Leacock, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (New York: John Lane Company, 1914); Stephen Leacock, "Democracy and Social Progress," in *The New Era in Canada*, pp. 13-33.
[138] Willison, *The New Canada*, p. 104.
[139] Rogers, "Land and Tariffs," p. 153.

culture.[140] Canadians, argued Skelton, could not "make state regulation of...industry, as in Australasia, the normal procedure."[141] Anglo-Canadians, however, closely followed debates in the United Kingdom - most notably Lloyd George's 1909 'People's Budget.' As Skelton wrote:

> the Lloyd George Budget...and the election which it has precipitated, have attracted unusual attention in Canada. We are always interested in the political affairs of the sister states of the Empire, but the present situation awakened special interest because of the unprecedented importance of the issues at stake.[142]

Indeed, Lloyd George upended Gladstonian finance by raising taxes and social spending over Conservative opposition in the House of Lords. Yet while Liberals and Fabians aligned against Conservatives and Unionists, both sides embraced elements of progressivism.[143] Goldwin Smith noted this trend years earlier, dismissing the "socialistic radicalism" of 'new' Liberals and Liberal Unionists alike.[144] James Bryce's claim that "sound economics have been sadly forgotten in England," similarly lamented the Gladstonian decline.[145] As a Liberal Unionist explained to Willison: "If we can agree to a progressive programme we shall sweep the country...[but] we may be beaten, squeezed between Conservatism [and] Socialism. Liberalism is dead."[146]

The 1910 British election was so significant that Willison travelled to London to report firsthand.[147] Anglo-Canadian imperialists, like their British counterparts, increasingly endorsed progressive reforms and notions of 'national efficiency.' It was essential, Willison concluded, for imperialists to cultivate a "closer and more sympathetic identification with the people and a more

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[140] John Dafoe, *Under Southern Skies* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Free Press, 1925); WP/11/85/7388-91, Curtis to Willison, 22 August 1910; GWP/B2003-005/001/28, Bryce to Wrong, 30 April [1916?]; John Willison, "Australia as I saw it, 2 October 1924," *The Empire Club of Canada: Addresses* (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter, 1925), pp. 231-48.

[141] ODSP/1, "Discussion on Prof. Shortt's Paper, The Canadian Industrial Disputes Act, 1908"; O.D. Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 15:1 (1907), p. 70.

[142] OSP/10, "The Lloyd George Budget [1910]."

[143] Ben Jackson, "Socialism and the New Liberalism," in Ben Jackson and Marc Stears (eds.), *Liberalism as Ideology: Essays in Honour of Michael Freeden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 34-52; Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, ch. 4.

[144] JBP/16/146, Smith to Bryce, 27 November 1900; GSP/M-2184, Smith to B.R. Wise, 29 January 1890.

[145] JBP/17/193, Bryce to Smith, (copy), 23 December 1905.

[146] WP/47/324/34415 Ware to Willison, 13 June 1908. See also Mathew Fforde, *Conservatism and Collectivism, 1886-1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990).

[147] Clippingdale, *Willison*, pp. 248-51

intimate relation to social reform."[148] This echoed Alfred Milner's belief that "Imperial consolidation...domestic reform and social progress...are essentially related and complementary."[149] In this respect, liberal imperialists embraced progressivism as enthusiastically as autonomists. Revealingly, when Oscar Skelton celebrated the "triumph of Radicalism...in the [British] Liberal Party," he noted that Lloyd George's "nearest parallel is Joseph Chamberlain."[150]

III

But Canada's relatively late industrialisation retarded its labour and socialist movements compared to elsewhere in the Anglo-world.[151] This both reinforced liberal notions of British-American exceptionalism and served as a forewarning. Oscar Skelton and Edward Kylie, for example, recognised the weakness of Canadian socialism even as they sought to inhibit its growth.[152] Canada, Skelton wrote in 1911, "is not yet as advanced in industrial development as the United States," and excepting British Columbia, where "the influence of American and English socialism...have given rise to a...thoroughgoing Marxian orthodoxy," as well as Winnipeg, with its continental European labourers, Canadian socialism was "likely to remain sporadic and exotic."[153] John Willison agreed that, aside from British Columbia, Canada was relatively immune to socialism.[154] Nonetheless, industrialisation and urbanisation in southern Ontario threatened to exacerbate labour conflict. "The outlook is threatening," Goldwin Smith observed, "not to industry and commerce only, but to the

[148] *TN*, 10 January 1910. See also GPP/31-6/9779, Wrong to Parkin, 16 November 1911; WP/32/243/24161, Parkin to Willison, 12 July 1912.
[149] Alfred Milner, "Women's Canadian Club, Montreal, November 2, 1908, Imperialism and Social Reform," in *The Nation and the Empire*, pp. 352-3.
[150] OSP/10, "The Lloyd George Budget [1910]."
[151] Ian McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People's Enlightenment in Canada, 1890-1920* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008), pp. 130-32, 518-20.
[152] Edward Kylie, "The Menace of Socialism," *The Empire Club of Canada: Addresses* (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter, 1909), pp. 120-28; Edward Kylie, "The Workers' Educational Association," *UM* 12 (1913), pp. 665-73; Oscar Skelton, "Are We Drifting into Socialism?" *The Monetary Times* 50 (January 1913), p. 52.
[153] Skelton, *Socialism*, pp. 309-10; OSP/1, "Political Science, Final Honours: Socialism, 1912-13," Skelton to Mrs. Skelton, 17 May 1910.
[154] Willison, *The New Canada*, pp. 108-11.

general relations between classes and even to the unity of the commonwealth."[155] Progressive reforms, liberals hoped, could inoculate Dominion nation-building against class-based politics.

But 'Greater Ontario' liberals were growing weary of 'Laurier Liberalism.' This was analogous to post-Gladstonian British politics where ideas of social reform and economic interventionism confused old political alignments.[156] Oscar Skelton, for instance, identified with a "liberal progressivness,"[157] and looked to W.L.M. King as a future Liberal leader who understood modern industrial problems.[158] "[N]ow that Sir Wilfrid is growing old," W.L. Grant similarly wrote to King, "there is no one to whom I look with such confidence as I do to yourself to keep the [Liberal] Party both clean and progressive."[159] The Liberal party evidently required "reconstruction and rejuvenation," and Laurier - though deeply respected and entrenched - increasingly represented a past age.[160] This attitude was captured in a 1913 letter to Skelton: "The Liberal party nowhere seems to realise its need of new forces...Laurier has little conception of modern Liberalism, [and] is in no mind to encourage those who have."[161]

On the imperialist side, John Willison expressed similar views. In the 1890s and early 1900s he maintained that Laurier was sufficiently progressive "to make [Canada] the model State among all the British commonwealths."[162] Though "a moderate Liberal, in the main conservative...[and] individualistic," Willison argued that Laurier was

> hardly the inferior of any of his contemporaries in the economic school which modern industrial conditions have created. His administration is distinguished for progressive social legislation, for sympathetic recognition of the changing relationships between labour and capital, and for intelligent comprehension of the new responsibilities imposed upon governments by the capitalistic organization of modern industry.[163]

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[155] Goldwin Smith, *Labour and Capital: A Letter to a Labour Friend* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), p. 1.
[156] Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists,* p. 148-9, 288-96.
[157] OSP/1, Skelton to Mrs. Skelton, 14 May 1909.
[158] WLMKP/C-1916/16966, Skelton to King, 24 September 1911. See especially W.L.M. King, *Industry and Humanity: A Study in the Principles Underlying Industrial Reconstruction* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1918).
[159] WLMKP/C-1912, W.L. Grant to King, 6 February 1910. See also WLMKP/C-1911/11845, Smith to King, 24 June 1909.
[160] CSP/183/147479, Dafoe to Sifton, 7 July 1908.
[161] OSP/1, Hawkes to Skelton, 17 October 1913.
[162] *TG*, 2 November 1900.
[163] Willison, *Laurier*, II, p. 389.

Soon, however, Willison embraced an interventionist idea of government far beyond what Laurier countenanced. This was apparent in the railway disputes discussed above. Moreover, after 1905 the Ontario Conservative party, led by James Whitney (1843-1914), claimed the mantle of urban progressivism and earned the support of Willison's Toronto *News*.[164] Robert Borden emulated the Ontario Tories and, with Willison's approval, included a series of progressive reforms in his 1907 'Halifax Platform.'[165] The Conservative party thus became a vehicle for Willison's liberal imperialism, including a commitment to "social improvement and...industrial and political reform."[166] As he wrote to Borden:

> When all is said the National and British ideal is expressed in the Conservative party. But...of course you have nothing of the temper or outlook of a Tory...It does not need to be said that the party to which we belong is a Radical, not a Conservative party.[167]

"Willison," W.L. Grant later explained, "is a Conservative, though still with a touch of his ancient radicalism."[168]

This radicalism was tested by the Great War. Rising prices, conscription, and demobilisation exacerbated social and racial tensions.[169] The reaction to the Winnipeg General Strike in particular combined fear of labour radicalism with distrust of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants.[170] In this context, there was a marked growth in 'corporatist' views of political economy. W.L. Grant, for example, believed that "State action on a big scale" could facilitate a "programme for the harmonious cooperation of Government, Capital, [and] Labour."[171] Oscar Skelton similarly endorsed "industrial democracy,"[172] while John Willison suggested that "the ideal form of industrial organization is...the plant council[.]" Canada, he argued, "will and should have co-operation, almost amounting to

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[164] LP/C-818/93378-80, Willison to Laurier, 14 January 1905; Clippingdale, *Willison*, p. 209
[165] WP/4/32/2281, Willison to Borden (draft), 15 August 1907; English, *Decline of Politics*, pp. 35-6, 46.
[166] WP/ 52/3/37633, Undated speech [1911?].
[167] RBP/C-4319/40551, Willison to Borden, 23 July 1917; WP/4/32/2512, Willison to Borden (copy), 22 July 1917.
[168] WLGP/2, Grant to Dafoe (copy), 3 April 1924.
[169] See for example O.D. Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 27:1 (1919), pp. 121-8.
[170] Donald Avery, "Ethnic and Class Relations in Western Canada during the First World War: A Case Study of European Immigrants and Anglo-Canadian Nativism," in David Mackenzie (ed.), *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), ch. 10.
[171] WP/17/131/12362-4, W.L. Grant to Willison, 22 July 1918.
[172] LP/C-918/201872, Suggestions for a Farmers' Platform, enclosed in Skelton to Laurier, 18 November 1918.

partnership between Capital and Labor," including an important role for government.[173] Ontario liberals thus provided a local example of broader British and Anglo-world trends. As Willison noted, opponents of "Labor and Radical leaders in Great Britain and the United States...have become less conservative."[174] Even Wilfrid Laurier, who in 1910 regarded government intervention in an industrial dispute as a "very dangerous precedent," recognised that 'Gladstonian' liberalism was flagging.[175] As he wrote to his successor W.L.M. King in late-1918:

> It is becoming everyday more evident that labour problems will be the problems of reconstruction. Your knowledge of these questions, [and] the close study which you have made of them, particularly fits you for the contests which are now already coming up, [and] it is in this connection that I am now anxious to meet you.[176]

Indeed, in the 1920s King worked with Oscar Skelton to rebuild the Liberal party in 'Greater Ontario' and reunite Canada's "progressive forces."[177] But with the ascension of King and the post-war decline of imperialism, there was little left to divide John Willison from a progressive Liberalism. "I am thinking as never before of public affairs from the purely National standpoint," he later wrote to King, and "I am convinced that you have an opportunity to create a very strong National Liberal Party, and to consolidate behind you many of the vital influences of this country."[178]

Conclusion

The 'Laurier era' was characterised by a range of proposals for political, economic, and social reform - many of which, including referendums, alcohol prohibition, municipal transit, women's suffrage, and income tax proposals were passed over in this chapter. Nonetheless, it illuminated a general tendency whereby liberals regarded 'reform' as necessary to consolidate Dominion nation-building and foster national democratic institutions. This was an assertion of Britannic nationalism in that

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[173] WLGP/10, Willison to W.L. Grant, 31 July 1918; John Willison, *A National Policy: An Address by Sir John Willison, 17 July 1918* (Toronto: Canadian Industrial Reconstruction Association, 1918), pp. 11-12
[174] Willison, *A National Policy* , p. 12.
[175] WLMKP/C-1912/13431, Laurier to King, 11 August 1910.
[176] WLMKP/C-1932/35169, Laurier to King, 1 December 1918.
[177] WLMKP/C-1951/57572, King to Skelton (copy), 11 March 1921.
[178] WLMKP/C-2250/69939, Willison to King, 16 August 1922; WP/23/173/17168, Willison to King (copy), 16 August 1922.

entrenched patronage and corruption indicated a failure to attain 'British' standards of government. At the same time, industrialisation and urbanisation challenged the myth of Canadian 'better Britonism,' while progressive reforms across the Anglo-world showed that Canada lagged behind in the modernisation of its political institutions.

After 1900, dissatisfaction with Wilfrid Laurier intensified. Though the Liberal party corrected the worst excesses of the 'Macdonald system' it was not a radical, but a moderate 'Gladstonian' Liberal government - more suited perhaps to the nineteenth than the twentieth-century. Growing disillusion with Laurier's seemingly meagre attempts to tackle patronage and corruption; his lukewarm commitment to Senate and Civil Service reform; and resistance to progressive demands for government intervention in the economy nourished a sense that 'Greater Ontario' liberalism and ideas of Britannic nationalism were moving beyond the 'Laurier era.' Following the Great War this proposition was no longer in doubt.

8

The Great War for Empire

"The union of hearts which exists in the United Kingdom exists also in Canada, in Australia, in New Zealand."[1]
- Wilfrid Laurier, 1914

In late-July 1914, Canadians were more transfixed by the spectre of civil war in Ireland than the escalating European crisis.[2] As the Toronto *News* declared on 25 July: "ULSTER SITUATION WAS NEVER SO CRITICAL / Danger of a General European War is Seen in Austro-Servian [*sic*] Situation."[3] By the 30th, however, Ireland was off the front page:

> There is a desperate danger that Great Britain will be involved in the war...We, in Canada, in Australia, in New Zealand, and in South Africa are as deeply interested as are the people of the Mother Islands...We are on the edge of an emergency from which we cannot escape, and we must...stand worthily with the British people throughout the King's Dominions.[4]

On 4 August 1914, following the invasion of France through neutral Belgium, the United Kingdom declared war on Germany in alliance with France and Russia. Canadian Premier Robert Borden recalled Parliament and cabled London the Dominion's intent to raise an expeditionary force. By 1918 close to 600,000 Canadians had served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF)[5] - including nearly 40 per cent of Ontarian men of military age,[6] or "roughly half of all the country's voluntary recruits."[7] Approximately 60,000 Canadians were killed in what contemporaries called the Great War.[8] It was a price that earned the Dominion a seat at the Paris Peace Conference and the new League of Nations, and legal equality with Great Britain in 1931.

The war thus boosted the Dominion's claim to sovereignty and solidified an Anglo-Canadian national mythology.[9] Subsequent historians emphasised the conflict's influence on Canada's

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[1] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 18 August 1914.
[2] See for example ODSP/1/1914-16, Laurier to Skelton, 27 July 1914.
[3] *TN*, 25 July 1914.
[4] *TN*, 30 July 1914.
[5] Wood, *Militia Myths*, pp. 254.
[6] Adam Crerar, "Ontario and the Great War," in *Canada and the First World War*, p. 232.
[7] Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, I, p. 237.
[8] Ibid., p. 238.
[9] Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

evolution from 'colony to nation.' Nationalists lionised the "loosening of imperial ties"[10] while sober military historians declared a Canadian "war of independence."[11] Recently, however, cultural historians have reminded us that Canadians' strong sense of 'Britishness' both motivated and outlived their participation in the conflict.[12] But political historians have tended to explain liberal views of the war in 'national' - as opposed to 'imperial' - terms.[13] Yet this conceptual divide, as we have seen, is unsustainable. 'Britishness' was no conservative monopoly and even radical liberals were not 'un-British.' The Anglo-Canadian experience of the Great War, therefore, is perhaps best understood in terms of Britannic nationalism.[14]

In that light, this chapter seeks to revise our understanding of how 'Greater Ontario' liberals viewed both the Great War and Wilfrid Laurier's wartime leadership. To that end, it argues that liberals conceived Canada's role in the imperial war effort terms of a claim to 'Britannic' nationhood, and that the disputes that arose during the conflict should be seen in the broader context of debates over Dominion nation-building. It proceeds in three sections. The first explores liberal and 'Greater Ontarian' responses to the outbreak of the war. Next it turns to how Canada's involvement was seen to affect its future in the British Empire. Finally, it considers liberal support for, and opposition to, the formation of a Union Government and the imposition of military conscription.

A Greater British War

I

King George V declared war on Germany as an Imperial Sovereign. When the United Kingdom was at war, so too were the British Dominions. But across the British world constitutional niceties were

[10] Pierre Berton, *Vimy* (Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword, 2012 [1986]), p. 225.
[11] Desmond Morton and J.L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914-1919* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1989), p. 1.
[12] Mark David Sheftall, *Altered Memories of the Great War: Divergent Narratives of Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009); Jonathan Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire: Canada, Britain, and Two World Wars* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2012), ch. 4.
[13] See for example R. Matthew Bray, "'Fighting as an Ally: The English-Canadian Patriotic Response to the Great War," *CHR* 61:2 (1980), pp. 141-68. For a useful corrective, see Wesley C. Gustavson, "Competing Visions: Canada, Britain, and the Writing of the First World War," in *Canada and the British World*, pp. 142-56.
[14] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 336-8.

irrelevant, and Canadians greeted the war with pan-Britannic patriotism.[15] "[T]here was no difference of opinion," Oscar Skelton recalled, "with Britain in danger, Canada would be emphatically at war."[16] Liberal intellectuals, though anxious, shared this response. Adam Shortt, who was in London as news of the war broke, recognised its significance: "The great fear has been realized and the world is now at war, including Great Britain [and] the rest of the Empire."[17] Amid wild rumours and financial panic, George Wrong similarly digested the news: "The die is cast. Britain declared war on Germany...and now we shall have the most stupendous struggle in the history of the world."[18]

There was no question, however, that though "the war will be long and bloody," as Clifford Sifton put it, Canada would "do her whole duty[.]"[19] On 18 August, Wilfrid Laurier spoke for Canadian Liberalism when he declared to the House of Commons that Canada was "Ready, aye ready": "[T]here is in Canada but one mind and heart...Long we have enjoyed the benefit of our British citizenship; to-day it is our duty to accept its responsibilities and its sacrifices...England to-day is not engaged in an ordinary contest. The war in which she is engaged will...stagger the world with its magnitude and its horror."[20] The Dominion was entering an unprecedented war, and perhaps surprisingly there was negligible opposition from French-Canadians or Anglo-Canadian pacifists.[21] It was no exaggeration when John Willison claimed that "no Government could have lived against the anger that would have swept Canada with the sudden fury of a tempest if there had been hesitation or refusal to unite...in defence of the common Empire."[22]

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[15] E.M. Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-Australian Relations during World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 40-43; Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, pp. 95-112; Ian Hugh Maclean Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 16; Robert Allen Rutherdale, *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada's Great War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), pp. 34-7.

[16] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 427.

[17] ASP/4/29, Shortt to wife, 5 August 1914.

[18] GWP/2003/005/007/50, diary, 5 August 1914.

[19] JDP/M-73, Sifton to Dafoe, 21 September 1914

[20] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 18 August 1914.

[21] Geoff Keelan, "Catholic Neutrality: The Peace of Henri Bourassa," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 22:1 (2011), p. 106; Thomas Socknat, *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada, 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 45.

[22] John Willison, *Canada's Relation to the Great War: An Address by Sir John Willison before the University Club of Rochester, New York, February 19, 1916* (Toronto: The News Publishing Company of Toronto, 1916), pp. 4-5.

This enthusiasm was critical given that the Dominions determined the scope of their participation in the conflict. Indeed, while historians often emphasise Canada's colonial status at the war's outset, the fact was that Ottawa alone decided of how, and how much, the Dominion might contribute. "As a matter of international law," John Ewart explained, "Canada is at war when the United Kingdom is at war, yet...Canada must determine...whether or not she will actively participate[.]" To this extent, Canada was self-governing and "not...part of the British Empire."[23] Nor was not an especially radical interpretation. "Canada," George Wrong agreed, "is technically at war whenever Great Britain is at war. But...Canada takes just as much share in the wars of the British Empire as she chooses to take...[and] as far as the self-governing states of the British Commonwealth are concerned, there is really no such thing as a British Empire."[24] Germany hardly menaced North America and Canadians might have adopted a 'colonial' position of limited support for Britain. So why did Anglo-Canadian liberals opt to defend the British Empire, as Laurier put it, "to the fullest extent of [their] power"?[25]

First, Britain's role in the July Crisis - though not 'secret diplomacy' generally - was widely defended.[26] Even Henri Bourassa lauded Foreign Secretary Edward Grey and initially acquiesced to participation in the war "to help the cause of France and Belgium."[27] But positive views of British diplomacy were a necessary though not sufficient condition for what became a national crusade. Britain was also seen as upholding liberal values - even 'British civilisation' - against German militarism and autocracy, or 'Prussianism.' Clifford Sifton, for instance, encouraged Canadians to look "to our own history, that is, the history of England," to see that as Britons they were obliged to defend "the principles of liberty[.]" For Sifton, Canada's 'Britishness' stood in marked contrast to the

[23] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, II, pp. 196-8.
[24] Wrong, "Nationalism in the British Empire," pp. 45-6.
[25] Quoted in Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 428.
[26] John Ewart, *Canada and British Wars* (Ottawa, 1923), pp. 20-21; Dafoe, *Sifton*, p. 386; W.L. Grant, "Current Events," *QQ* 22:2 (1914), pp. 220-23; Edward Kylie, *Who Caused the War? A Study of the Diplomatic Negotiations Leading to the War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1915). See also Thompson, *The Harvests of War*, p. 29.
[27] HBP/M-721, Bourassa to Cahan, 3 October 1914; Henri Bourassa, *The Foreign Policy of Great Britain* (Montreal: Le Devoir, 1915), pp. 4-5.

German Empire, which "consecrated all the powers of despotism to the suppression of individual liberty."[28] George Wrong echoed this view. "I cannot, as a Briton, feel any hatred of the Germans," he recorded. "But I do feel bitter anger at the few blind militarists in Berlin...The war is as much...for the liberty of the Germans as it is for that of other peoples."[29] He thus urged "The democracies of Greater Britain" to "stand together in all parts of the world to support...British liberty."[30] "The German people are not free," Wrong concluded. "Let this be written down as the ultimate cause of the great war [*sic*]."[31]

Ideas of British liberty, however, were entwined with Anglo-Saxonism and British 'race patriotism.' And this pan-Britannic racial feeling, as historian John Mitcham argues, was critical to war mobilisation across Greater Britain.[32] As Oscar Skelton commented: "Canada was involved in the first place by her formal connection with Britain...It was true that many a man who had no racial ties...cherished the memory of Britain's gifts of political liberty and of individual freedom to the world, but this could not take the place of the warm and unrecking sympathy of race."[33] Without this sense of Britishness, he noted, "the United States had interests as great as Canada's at stake."[34] Britannic nationalism thus explained the difference between Canadian and American responses to the war. "Here in Ontario," Skelton later reiterated, "the plain fact [was] that we went into the war wholly from racial sympathy with England."[35] The war, his mentor Adam Shortt similarly concluded, threatened the "very existence as well as the civilization of the race[.]"[36]

But there was a crucial third factor: an opportunity for Canadians to prove themselves on the world stage and even consolidate Dominion nation-building by uniting behind a great national

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[28] Clifford Sifton, *Some Historical Reflections Relating to the War* (Ottawa, 1915), pp. 6, 8, 16; O.D. Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 24:1 (1916), p. 139.
[29] GWP/2003/005/007/50, diary, 5-6 August 1914.
[30] George Wrong, *The War Spirit of Germany* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1915 [?]), pp. 26-7.
[31] Ibid., p. 3.
[32] Mitcham, *Race and Imperial Defence*, pp. 217-31.
[33] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 430.
[34] Ibid., p. 431.
[35] WLGP/9, Skelton to W.L. Grant, 19 March 1917.
[36] Adam Shortt, *Early Economic Effects of the European War Upon Canada* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1918), p. 11.

endeavour. It was in this sense that Sifton hoped that Canada would discover its "national soul,"[37] while John Dafoe discerned "a more robust and self confident Canadianism."[38] This vision of national self-realisation, however, was perfectly consistent with Britishness. "[I]f we had failed to assist in this war," John Willison claimed, "we would have been sunk in self-contempt...Who would suggest that...we can sing God Save the King, boast of our British citizenship...and do nothing in time of war[?]"[39] In retrospect, Oscar Skelton identified a range of factors that fuelled the Britannic nationalist consensus of which liberals were a part: "the call of the blood, imperialist sympathy with outraged Belgium and bleeding France, hatred of German militarism, pride in Canadian achievement - all would urge the sons of Canada."[40] In the autumn of 1914 they urged over 30,000 Canadians, more than half of whom were born in the United Kingdom, to sail with the first contingent.[41]

II

At the outset of the war Wilfrid Laurier offered Robert Borden "a truce to party strife."[42] This was a symbolic gesture as well as a political calculation.[43] Laurier had been preparing for an upcoming election, and even after the outbreak of the conflict there were forces agitating for a campaign.[44] But while Conservatives blamed Liberals for denying the German threat during the naval debates there were strong "arguments against an appeal to the country," notably its deleterious effect on national unity.[45] At the same time, Laurier reckoned that a wartime election would inflame Britannic nationalism against the Liberals: "I have no doubt whatever that if we have an election the flag waving will be the chief argument of the Tories."[46] However, Laurier's staunch support for the war and his offer of a political 'truce' rendered "an election...unnecessary and dangerous for the

[37] JDP/M-73, Sifton to Dafoe, 21 September 1914
[38] Ibid., Dafoe to Sifton (copy), 12 February 1917.
[39] WP/53/37912, Untitled speech, [1917].
[40] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 431.
[41] Tim Cook, *At the Sharp End: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1914-1916* (Toronto: Penguin, 2007), p. 28.
[42] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 428.
[43] Dafoe, *Laurier*, pp. 146-52.
[44] Schull, *Laurier*, pp. 542-3; RTP/822/202, Willison to E. Grigg, 6 October 1914.
[45] RTP/822/208, Willison to E. Grigg, 10 November 1914.
[46] JDP/M-73, Laurier to Dafoe, 8 December 1914.

Conservatives."[47] Eventually, the two parties agreed to extend parliament for an additional year, through 1917.

Yet deep divisions were merely obscured, the most obvious between the Anglo provinces and Quebec. Though French-Canadians acquiesced to Dominion participation relatively few enlisted.[48] *Nationalistes* led by Henri Bourassa, moreover, denied that the conflict was a 'crusade' for British civilisation and democracy - it was merely an "Anglo-German fight for the domination of the world."[49] As he reminded one correspondent: "the majority of the present English Cabinet were on the point of resigning, and...one of the most thoughtful men of our times, John Morley, actually did so, rather than fight Germany[.]"[50] Bourassa thus endorsed a 'colonial' contribution premised on securing "the internal safety of Canada, before we attempt to settle the affairs of the world."[51]

'Greater Ontario' liberals were furious. Edward Kylie, for instance, scoffed at the idea that the Dominion was "being defended anywhere except in France and the North Sea" - a claim so absurd that it "might have been written by Bourassa."[52] John Willison similarly noted that "[no] more than 500 or 600 French Canadians are among the 33,000 who have gone with the first contingent...For my part I expected nothing else...Not even for old France have the French-Canadians any enthusiasm."[53] Nonetheless, Willison invoked Canada's 'dual race origin' as a factor in the war effort. Canada, he claimed, was

> not an English-speaking country as in Great Britain, or Australia or New Zealand...the French [Canadians have] a threefold loyalty; to France, whence they have their language and their literature; to Great Britain...which guarantees their racial and religious privileges, and to Canada, in which they have free and equal citizenship.[54]

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[47] English, *Decline of Politics*, p. 90.
[48] Patrice Dutil, "Against Isolationism: Napoleon Belcourt, French Canada, and 'La grande guerre,'" in *Canada and the First World War*, p. 98.
[49] HBP/M-721, Bourassa to Cahan, 3 October 1914.
[50] Ibid., 10 October 1914.
[51] Henri Bourassa, *The Duty of Canada at the Present Hour: An Address meant to be delivered at Ottawa, in November and December, 1914, but twice suppressed in the name of 'Loyalty and Patriotism'* (Montreal: Le Devoir, 1915), p. 5.
[52] WP/24/176/17480, Kylie to Willison, 20 October 1914.
[53] RTP/822/200, Willison to E. Grigg, 6 October 1914.
[54] Willison, *Great War*, p. 7.

This notion, however, elicited Bourassa's rebuke: "Whatever the duty of Canada...that duty commands the whole of the Canadian people, irrespective or race, creed or language."[55] But criticism of Bourassa's attitude was not limited to imperialists. Even John Ewart regretted his position and urged him to "contribute to...what our country - yours and mine - has almost unanimously agreed to accept."[56] John Dafoe was less sympathetic. Quebec, he fumed, "has become infected with the disease of Bourassaism."[57]

Urban and rural Canada, as well as native-born and immigrant populations, were further divided. Many farmers anticipated rising demand for Canadian wheat and saw their primary role in terms of food production.[58] Moreover, while recent immigrants from Britain were concentrated in Ontario's urban centres (as well as the western provinces) rural men tended to be older, married, and property owners - further hampering recruitment.[59] Though average enlistment on the Prairies was roughly equal to Ontario this reflected a higher percentage of 'British-born' and the economic fallout from the recent 'bust' - "hungerscription" boosted Western recruitment.[60] More dangerously, Anglo-Saxonist xenophobia fed doubts over the 'loyalty' of continental Europeans, especially Germans and Ukrainians, culminating in the internment of roughly 8,000 'enemy aliens.'[61] Long-settled German communities in southwestern Ontario were also harassed and intimidated. Infamously, the city of Berlin, west of Toronto, was renamed 'Kitchener' after the British Secretary of War.[62] Yet as historian Jonathan Vance reminds us, "more than simple anti-immigrant prejudice [was] at work here."[63] Some European immigrants served as reservists with their old countries, while a small minority advocated for the Central Powers and inflated unfounded fears of German-

[55] Bourassa, *The Duty of Canada*, p. 37-8.
[56] HBP/M-721, Ewart to Bourassa, 1 December 1916.
[57] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Cote (copy), 6 April 1916.
[58] CSP/201/159285/5, Dafoe to Chisholm, 23 November 1914.
[59] Crerar, "Ontario," p. 236.
[60] Ibid., p. 24.
[61] Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, p. 352.
[62] Crerar, "Ontario," pp. 254-7.
[63] Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire*, p. 41.

American aggression.[64] As Arthur Glazebrook reported: "in the German part of Ontario, for example...the feeling is very decidedly [pro-] German."[65] The Liberals, however, drew substantial support from non-Anglo immigrants and Wilfrid Laurier sympathised with German-Canadians, whose "lot at the present time is rather a painful one."[66]

Yet on the whole Canadians weathered the initial shock of the war remarkably united. Borden's Minister of the Militia, the erratic and irascible Ontario Orangeman Sam Hughes (1853-1921), despite his faults, raised the CEF from scratch.[67] The raw and untrained 'citizen soldiers' of a 'democratic army' buttressed the Dominion's 'better British' mythology, thanks in part to effective propaganda.[68] Crucially, though, liberal politicians and intellectuals accepted the unprecedented demands of total war, including the War Measures Act (1914), which suspended *habeas corpus* and allowed Borden's Cabinet to rule by decree.[69] Press censorship further stifled domestic criticism as well as news from the Front. But this was hardly a case of a "jingoistic press" regurgitating "imperialist dogma," as one historian maintained.[70] Rather, Canadian publishers reflected a near-unanimous public opinion in favour of an unprecedented Canadian war effort as part of the Empire. Revealingly, even John Ewart promoted wartime solidarity and believed it wrong "to say anything that would tend to distract our people during the stress of the war."[71] Among 'Greater Ontario' liberals, therefore, opposition to the war was practically non-existent.

Empire to Commonwealth

I

[64] Tim Cook, *Warlords: Borden, Mackenzie King, and Canada's World Wars* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2012), pp. 42-7.
[65] AGP/Glazebrook to Milner (copy), 5 January 1915.
[66] JDP/M-73, Laurier to Dafoe, 8 December 1914.
[67] Ibid., Sifton to Dafoe, 21 September 1914.
[68] Tim Cook, "Quill and Canon: Writing the Great War in Canada," *ARCS* 35:3 (2005), pp. 504-5. See especially Max Aitken, *Canada in Flanders* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1916).
[69] Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, p. 213.
[70] Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship in Canada's Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996), p. xii.
[71] HBP/M-721, Ewart to Bourassa, 1 December 1916 [emphasis in original].

By 1915 the war's horror was apparent. The first Canadian Division arrived on the Western Front and was engaged at the Second Battle of Ypres (22 April - 25 May 1915). "More than 6,000 Canadians were killed, maimed, or captured. The shock of these losses swept over the Dominion, as Canadians found their newspapers filled with the names of their neighbours, brothers, and sons listed among the dead."[72] The first week of May 1915, John Willison lamented, was "the saddest week Toronto has ever known."[73] Yet Anglo-Canadian resolve stiffened: recruitment remained high; industry was reorganised for total war; and Western farmers anticipated "the best crop in many years."[74] As 're-colonial' economic links tightened Canada became a granary and arsenal of the Empire, providing the bulk of British wheat, cheese, and pork, and up to one-third of the shells for the Western Front.[75] But the deepening war effort stirred the debate over Dominion sovereignty. "It is realised," Robert Borden affirmed, "that the great policies and questions...of peace and war cannot in future be decided...[in] the British Islands alone."[76]

Indeed, John Ewart expressed a widespread view when he noted that the war made "perfectly clear the necessity for some definite solution to the present unsatisfactory state of affairs."[77] Liberal autonomists, of course, upheld independence while imperialists argued that "the Dominions must be consulted" over Imperial policy.[78] Sometimes the clash was collegial, as when Arthur Glazebrook and W.L. Grant discussed the Round Table at Queen's University. "I am going down to Kingston to attack that citadel of Whig opportunism," Glazebrook recorded. "All the Gladstonian Scotch-Liberal noses will be turned up at me."[79] But it was also deeply political. "I am anxious about the future," John Willison wrote, and "until Laurier disappears or is finally discredited

[72] Cook, *Warlords*, p. 51.
[73] LP/C-908/190902, Willison to Laurier, 9 May 1915; Miller, *Torontonians*, pp. 39-44.
[74] CSP/202/160119/30, Dafoe to Sifton, 17 August 1915. On industrial production, see JFP/2/1915/B-H/959-63, Flavelle to Borden (copy), 25 June 1915.
[75] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 416-17, 468.
[76] Robert Borden, *The War and the Future* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1917), p. 39.
[77] HBP/M-721, Ewart to Bourassa, 28 January 1916.
[78] BWP/29B, Kylie to Walker, 19 January 1915.
[79] AGP/Glazebrook to Milner (copy), 5 January 1915.

no great progress in the Imperial movement can be made in Canada."[80] The Round Table, he argued, would have to engage in "political conflict, and probably party conflict."[81]

Autonomists perceived the looming threat. "If there be anything in Liberal ideas of nationality [and] s[e]lf-government," liberal journalist Arthur Hawkes wrote to John Dafoe, "men who are governed by them will be forced to stand [and] fight together. There will be an attempt to Prussianise the Empire by our incurables, after the war, just as there was an attempt to make military vassals of the Dominions after the [South] African war."[82] Wilfrid Laurier, for his part, encouraged this defence of "Liberalism...in the British school."[83] Nonetheless, Canadians were keen to avoid divisive political arguments. John Ewart suspended his *Kingdom Papers* while Dafoe hoped that imperial relations could "be left in abeyance until we see more clearly how the war is to end."[84] "Canadians," he wrote, "could not bring themselves to the point of fighting one another while their sons and brothers were dying side by side in the mud of Flanders."[85]

For a time the imperial argument was repressed. "All parties in Canada are united to make the war a success for the Allies," Laurier affirmed after Ypres, "not only has there been a truce, but a united effort. Let it continue to be so...until peace is assured."[86] The Round Table, meanwhile, mobilised for military more than ideological combat. Vincent Massey, W.L. Grant, and Edward Kylie enlisted, and it seemed that little could be accomplished "until the war is over."[87] Events, however, intervened. In late-1915 Lionel Curtis released his scheme for Imperial Federation, *The Problem of the Commonwealth* (1915). Like 'Greater Ontario' liberals he recognised that the war raised the "Imperial problem in its acutest form...the Dominions will be alive to the reality of foreign affairs...and to the fact that they have no control over them whatever."[88] This arrangement, he

[80] RTP/822/208, Willison to E. Grigg, 10 November 1914.
[81] WP/24/176/17477-8, Willison to Kylie (copy), 19 October 1914.
[82] JDP/M-73, Hawkes to Dafoe 8 November 1914.
[83] LP/C909/192021, Laurier to Hawkes (copy), 13 May 1916.
[84] GWP/B2003/005/002/57, Dafoe to Wrong, 16 October 1916.
[85] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 149.
[86] WLMKP/C-1923/24899, Laurier to King, 12 July 1915.
[87] RTP/818/60, Glazebrook to Kerr, 7 December 1915.
[88] GWP/B2003/005/002/55, Curtis to Wrong, 2 February 1915.

noted, could "last only so long as the Dominions are content to remain as dependencies," since otherwise they were "separate sovereignties."[89] The only alternatives were independence or Imperial union, and Curtis endorsed a Greater British parliament with independent tax-raising powers.[90]

Curtis's federalism was logically sound, but his British colleagues worried about the reaction in the Dominions.[91] The book was thus privately circulated and initial reports were encouraging. Glazebrook wrote to Milner that, "the organization of the Empire may become a matter of practical, though not party, politics...[and] the interest with which 'The Problem of the Commonwealth' is being read...point[s] to a quantitative change in opinion[.]"[92] *The Problem*, Curtis explained to Robert Borden, was written to "draw fire...before practical statesmen enter the field."[93] It certainly proved a target for critics. "I would be glad to have a look at the book mentioned," Wilfrid Laurier wrote of *The Problem*: "I am familiar, however, with the theory which it is intended to support...to establish an Imperial Parliament...The idea is absurd and unworkable."[94] But while opponents dismissed Curtis's scheme they nonetheless shared its premises.[95] "We are, I think, at one with the Imperial Federationists," W.D. Gregory wrote to Laurier, "in the view the Canada should not be involved in any [British] war without her consent."[96] Indeed, *The Problem* clearly stated the constitutional dilemma facing Greater Britain. "Have you seen the recent publications of Lionel Curtis[?]" John Ewart asked Henri Bourassa, "The work...is extremely well done and most interesting."[97] Curtis, Bourassa agreed, had produced a "forceful and complete exposition of the Imperialist thesis...marked with a logical trend of reasoning...rarely found in Anglo-Saxon productions."[98]

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[89] Curtis, *The Problem of the Commonwealth*, p. 225.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, pp. 186-7.
[92] AGP/Glazebrook to Milner (copy), 18 January 1916.
[93] RBP/C-4237/21561, Curtis to Borden, 6 November 1915.
[94] LP/C-908/191018, Laurier to Lewis (copy), 11 February 1916.
[95] HBP/M-721, Gregory to Bourassa, 17 November 1916.
[96] LP/C-912/195244, Gregory to Laurier, 12 April 1917; HBP/M-721, Ewart to Bourassa, 7 January 1916.
[97] HBP/M-721, Ewart to Bourassa, 12 April 1916.
[98] Henri Bourassa, *Independence or Imperial Partnership: A Study of the Problem of the Commonwealth by Mr. Lionel Curtis* (Montreal: Le Devoir, 1916), p. 6.

But that strict reasoning made liberal imperialists wary. Toronto Round Tablers became "very much afraid of the taxation part of it,"[99] which they believed would be "the subject of...sustained attack from all the autonomist organs[.]"[100] Yet despite warnings that it "would alarm Liberal opinion in Canada...[and] seriously damage the cause," Curtis published the volume in May 1916.[101] Liberal imperialists were immediately on the defensive. One exchange was especially illuminating. Clifford Sifton, who relocated to London during the war, warned John Willison: "Don't let the Round Table fellows get you too far."[102] Willison responded with reference to *The Problem*: "While I do not go the length of Curtis's book I do go far with the Round Table...the Curtis book is unnecessarily dogmatic and states a definite scheme which is not likely to be adopted."[103] Sifton confidently responded: "With respect to the 'Round Table,' I wish you could come over here and spend a month in London while the War is on. It would I think profoundly affect your views."[104]

Two points are worth emphasising here. First, that even political allies and staunch Britannic nationalists like Willison and Sifton remained divided along autonomist and imperialist lines. Second, and of more immediate significance, was Sifton's allusion to dissatisfaction with the British-led war effort. Thus when Robert Borden raised Canada's enlistment target to 500,000 and renewed its recruitment campaign in early-1916, it was matched by the reorganisation of the CEF with Canadians in senior administrative positions.[105] From the beginning, Sifton argued, the Canadians "should have been officered, commanded, [and] administered as a Canadian force."[106] But while historians point to this "Canadianization" of the war effort as evidence of growing nationalism, it is perhaps more usefully characterised as an assertion of *Britannic* nationalism.[107] Indeed, Anglo-Canadians sought to exert their due influence in a truly Greater British war effort. As Borden complained: "It can hardly

[99] RTP/818/71, Glazebrook to Curtis, 16 February 1916.
[100] RTP/818/73-4, Glazebrook to Kerr, 14 March 1916.
[101] BWP/13/1916-16/5, Massey to Curtis, 21 February 1916, enclosed in Massey to Walker, 23 February 1916.
[102] WP/37/286/27533, Sifton to Willison, 13 May 1916.
[103] WP/37/286/27534, Willison to Sifton (copy), 16 May 1916.
[104] WP/37/286/27535, Sifton to Willison, 31 May 1916.
[105] Cook, *Warlords*, pp. 69-85.
[106] JDP/M-73, Sifton to Dafoe, 12 May 1916.
[107] Bray, "Fighting as an Ally," p. 150.

be expected that we shall put 400,000 or 500,000 men into the field and...hav[e] no more voice...than if we were a toy automata....Is the war being waged by the United Kingdom alone or is it a war waged by the whole Empire?"[108]

II

This sentiment was fuelled by the Battle of the Somme (1 July - 19 November 1916), in which the CEF "suffered 24,029 causalities out of a total strength of roughly 85,000,"[109] while Imperial casualties totaled close to 420,000 men.[110] Traditionally, Canadian intellectual historians have regarded these events as portending the downfall of imperialism and the ascent of nationalism.[111] To be sure, there was no doubt, as Clifford Sifton observed following the battle, that "we are coming into an epoch-making period in the history of Canada."[112] But the 'Nationalist' interpretation above conflates imperialism with Britishness while prematurely declaring the demise of both. While the ghastly events of the Somme certainly prompted an assertion of nationalism, it was nationalism of a distinctly Britannic type to which autonomists and imperialists alike subscribed.

The former continued to strive for a 'Gladstonian' Greater Britain. John Ewart, for instance, upheld his vision of 'sister kingdoms' under the British Crown, while Oscar Skelton regarded the Empire as one of several "leagues less than world-wide in scope which aim to secure peace."[113] W.D. Gregory, too, exemplified a type of Britishness in that his anti-imperialism drew upon John Bright and Richard Cobden even as his son served in the British Army Service Corps.[114] Ironically it was Henri Bourassa who succinctly expressed this civic, anti-imperial 'Britishness.' "My desire for the disruption of the British Empire," he affirmed, "is not because it is British, but because it is Imperial...All that is good in British ideals...would be better served by the free action of several

[108] Quoted in Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, I, pp. 192-3.
[109] Ibid.
[110] David Stevenson, *Cataclysm: The First World War as Political Tragedy* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), p. 136.
[111] See for example, Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, p. 37; Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 264.
[112] GWP/B2003/005/004/4/13, Sifton to Wrong, 8 September 1916.
[113] Skelton, "Current Events," pp. 150; HBP/M-721, Ewart to Bourassa, 7 January 1916.
[114] LP/C-912/195284a, Gregory to Laurier, 16 April 1917; "War Notes: Lawyers at the Front," *The Canada Law Journal* 52 (1916), p. 239.

independent British communities than by the common action of a monstrous Empire."[115] Liberal autonomists were convinced that Canada's status was unbecoming of a 'British nation' - a disconnect exacerbated by the conflict. Canada, John Dafoe avowed, was "in the war as a principal, not as a colony."[116]

In essence, this was a demand for the recognition of Canada's sacrifice. Many liberals, including Dafoe, Gregory, and Sifton, had sons in Europe; most knew friends and family in uniform.[117] W.L. Grant himself served in France while Edward Kylie died training in 1916 - a heavy blow to the Round Table.[118] For George Wrong and John Willison, however, the worst came when their sons were killed at the Somme.[119] In the months that followed, both espoused a strident Britannic nationalism that countenanced Canadian independence if Imperial union proved impracticable. As Willison wrote:

> I am a Canadian born on this soil and into the inheritance of British citizenship...But I want a full citizenship for myself and an equal partnership for my country in the Empire to which we belong...If under federation of the Empire we can acquire complete citizenship without the sacrifice of self-government in national affairs[,] federation is inevitable. If not nationalism with prevail in the end. An incomplete citizenship such as we of the Dominions now possess cannot be a final condition for British peoples.[120]

In this respect, Willison's view was effectively that which he held in the 1890s - that the demand for self-government, whether through independence or Imperial union, was an assertion of Britishness. George Wrong similarly observed that the defining feature of Greater British politics was the growth of national sentiment among "the various British peoples."[121] "The Canadian," he explained, "is different from the Australian and both are different from the Englishman...The difference is not racial, for the race is the same...All the scattered British commonwealths...have the

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[115] Quoted in Arthur Hawkes (ed.), *Canadian Nationalism and the War* (Montreal, 1916), p. 14; Alan Gordon, *Making Public Pasts: The contested terrain of Montreal's public memories, 1891-1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), p. 33

[116] Quoted in Cook, *Dafoe and the Free Press*, p. 85; O.D. Skelton, "Canada in Wartime," *Political Quarterly* 6 (1915), p. 59.

[117] CSP/202/160906/14, Dafoe to Sifton, 17 October 1916; Dafoe, *Sifton*, p. 390.

[118] WLGP/8, Parkin to W.L. Grant, 14 August 1916; RTP/818/179, Glazebrook to Kerr, 22 May 1916.

[119] RTP/780/139, Wrong to Kerr, 20 July 1916; Clippingdale, *Willison*, p. 310.

[120] WP/53/37904, 37911-12, Untitled speech [1917].

[121] Wrong, "Nationalism in the British Empire," p. 46.

unity of a family."[122] For Wrong, British 'race patriotism' existed alongside a liberal idea of Britishness premised on self-government: "Let us dismiss forever the superstition that there is any magic in race to...effect political unity. In the present war the...opponents are two great states of the same Teutonic race. It is partnership in common liberties which unites people...[and] the new nationalism in the British Empire is just the growth of liberty."[123]

Yet Anglo-Canadians were restive. Only days after hearing about the death of his son, Wrong wrote to the Round Table's Philip Kerr:

> The war has put this country into an extremely critical frame of mind...I note...a dislike to the term 'the Dominions' in which Canada is grouped...as a sort of appendage to the British Empire...If people in the motherland will keep in mind an analogy...between a Scot and a Canadian...they will avoid wounding this curious sensitiveness. No one would speak of the Scots fighting for England in this war. Of course the status of Canadians is not that of Scots and this is...what causes the sensitiveness.[124]

Furthermore, it was in 'Greater Ontario' where Britannic nationalism was most fully developed. From "Ontario westward to the Rockies," Wrong believed, "If the question of the organization of the Empire is properly handed it will carry all before it...But...it would not take much to turn this possibility into an Independence and Alliance movement. Failing the first I am myself for the second."[125] Here was the crux of liberal opinion - a 'Canada First' Britannic nationalism that underpinned both autonomist and imperialist visions. As Wrong confided to John Dafoe: "On imperial relations my own mind is still fluid...I myself think Curtis's plan beautiful as a theory...But...there is no remote chance of its being realized in my lifetime...I fancy that you and I are not very far apart[.]"[126] Dafoe responded:

> Those of us who are opposed to Mr. Curtis' [*sic*] proposition believe that its adoption would be fatal to the free development of the empire...I cannot see that there is any satisfactory solution...other than...the cooperation of all the British Dominions on the basis of nations and not of provinces...A permanent alliance of British nations...appears to me to be a sublime conception; but this project of a centralized empire...would ruin the race.[127]

III

[122] Ibid., pp. 50-51.
[123] Ibid., p. 51.
[124] RTP/780/139-41, Wrong to Kerr, 20 July 1916.
[125] Ibid.
[126] JDP/M-73, Wrong to Dafoe, 20 September 1916; CSP/C-596/162044, Wrong to Sifton, 2 March 1917.
[127] GWP/B2003/005/002/57, Dafoe to Wrong, 16 October 1916.

Liberals thus resented Canada's dependence - not the British connection - and increasingly saw a solution in what Dafoe called "a league of free British nations."[128] This was, in effect, John Ewart's idea of 'sister kingdoms' and a Britannic Alliance. Indeed, George Wrong employed the same language: "Perhaps...we shall yet see the Kingdom of Canada, one of various kingdoms under our common sovereign...this title would negative the impression that Canada is a dependent state."[129] Yet the imperialist vision remained potent. At a 1917 lecture at the University of Toronto, for example, John Willison argued that the growth of Dominion sentiment during the war provided an impetus to Imperial consolidation.[130] Significantly, though, Willison's address invoked Edward Blake's 1874 Aurora Speech to affirm the liberal, Canada First tradition of Britannic nationalism. After quoting Blake at length, Willison concluded: "there is at least a clear and unequivocal appeal for equal citizenship for all subjects of the king in the common empire."[131]

In December 1916, moreover, Anglo-Canadian imperialists were encouraged by events at Westminster. H.H. Asquith's Liberal-led coalition, condemned for its complacent prosecution of the war, was replaced by a new coalition under Liberal David Lloyd George. The new government, with Unionist support, embraced the logic of total war and rededicated Britain to victory. Most notably, decision-making was centralised in a five-man War Cabinet that included Alfred Milner. Other 'constructive imperialists,' including Leo Amery and Philip Kerr, served in administrative positions.[132] The British allies of Toronto's liberal imperialists were finally in power. As Willison wired Milner: "friends here rejoice you in government [*sic*]."[133] The effect was immediate - Lloyd George was "convinced that we should take the Dominions into our counsel in a much larger measure...We can

[128] John Dafoe, "Our Future in the Empire: Alliance Under the Crown," in *The New Era in Canada*, p. 290.
[129] Wrong, "The Creation of the Federal System in Canada," pp. 22-3.
[130] John Willison, "Some Political Leaders in the Canadian Federation," in *The Federation of Canada*, pp. 73-4. See also Arthur Glazebrook, "Our Future in the Empire: Central Authority," in *The New Era in Canada*, pp. 263-75.
[131] Willison, "Canadian Federation," p. 73.
[132] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 329-31; Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, pp. 169-71.
[133] AMP/44/1-2/255, Willison to Milner, 13 December 1916.

hardly ask them to make another great recruiting effort unless it is accompanied by an invitation to...discuss the situation with us."[134]

The result was a 'War Conference of the Empire' at which the Dominion Premiers attended the British War Cabinet - an arrangement ambiguous enough to earn autonomist as well as imperialist approval. Indeed, the Toronto Round Table had long-advocated a war conference to address the Dominions' "proportionate share in the defence of the Commonwealth, and...its relations with other states," while liberal autonomists were in no position to object.[135] Though Wilfrid Laurier noted that the title 'Imperial War Cabinet' (IWC) was a constitutional misnomer, it was obvious that Canada should be represented.[136] The Dominions, as Oscar Skelton put it, had "helped to pay the piper, henceforth they would insist on a share in calling the tune."[137] In private, however, Laurier was wary. The Liberal leader, John Dafoe reported Clifford Sifton, "deprecate[d] the apparent rise to power in Great Britain of that school of Imperial thought represented by Lord Milner and intimated that...[we should] be on our guard." But Dafoe's letter also revealed the breadth of the Britannic consensus: "I had a long and interesting conversation with Sir Robert Borden...[we] discussed the matter of Imperial reorganization...with special reference to the Curtis scheme, and...were in great measure in agreement."[138] Like Dafoe, Borden believed that the Imperial conference implied *de facto* recognition of the Dominions' equal status.[139] Though Britain continued to make the important decisions, the war cabinet was "an important gesture...[and] evidence that a fundamental shift had occurred...between the dominions and London."[140] This was confirmed when

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[134] Quoted in Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, I, pp. 203-4.
[135] RTP/818/87, memorandum enclosed in Glazebrook to Kerr, 27 June 1916; BWP/29B, Walker to Borden (copy), 10 January 1915.
[136] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 22 January 1917.
[137] O.D. Skelton, *The Day of Sir Wilfrid Laurier: A Chronicle of Our Own Times* (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Co., 1916), p. 319.
[138] CSP/205/161401/15-17, Dafoe to Sifton, 12 February 1917
[139] Robert Borden, *Canadian Constitutional Studies: The Marfleet Lectures, University of Toronto, October, 1921* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1922), p. 110; G.L. Cook, "Sir Robert Borden, Lloyd George and British Military Policy, 1917-1918," *HJ* 14:2 (1971), pp. 372-3.
[140] Cook, *Warlords*, p. 88.

the Conference produced Resolution IX, which declared the Dominions "autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth" with the "right...to an adequate voice in...foreign relations[.]"[141]

In London, furthermore, Borden learned of the Empire's dire strategic circumstances. The British army was depleted; French troops were mutinous; unrestricted submarine warfare threatened Britain's Atlantic lifeline; and Russia was in the throes of revolution.[142] Even good news highlighted the bad. On 6 April 1917 the United States finally declared war on Germany. But the American Expeditionary Force would not reach full strength until 1918 and Allied reinforcements were urgently needed. This was painfully clear following the Canadian triumph at Vimy Ridge (9-12 April 1917) where the Canadian Corps fought for the first time as a national unit.[143] It was an encouraging success, though the CEF suffered terribly with "3,598 killed and another 7,000 wounded."[144] Meanwhile, enlistment dropped precipitously; in April 1917 only 5,328 recruits joined the CEF - barely enough to replace the casualties sustained at Vimy.[145] When Borden returned to Canada in mid-May, he had decided to implement conscription.[146]

Union and Conscription

I

In 1916-17 debates over military conscription arose across the British world.[147] Until then voluntary recruitment had been sacrosanct. As Borden assured the House of Commons in August 1914: "The men of Canada who are going to the front are going as free men by voluntary enlistment[.]"[148] Coercion was not only illiberal but un-British - the Toronto *News*, for instance, boasted that the "pacifist British Empire has recruited, trained and equipped the largest volunteer force ever brought

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[141] Quoted in Borden, *Constitutional Studies*, p. 112.
[142] Cook, "British Military Policy, 1917-1918," p. 374.
[143] Tim Cook *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1917-1918* (Toronto: Penguin, 2008), pp. 141-8.
[144] Ibid., p. 142.
[145] Cook, *Warlords*, p. 93.
[146] Cook, "Canada's Relations with Britain," p. 297.
[147] Jeffrey Grey, "War and the British World in the Twentieth Century," in *Rediscovering the British World*, pp. 239-40.
[148] Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 18 August 1914.

into existence."[149] John Willison was unequivocal: "We have not had, and will not have, conscription or compulsion."[150] But Anglo-Canadian attitudes softened between Britain's passage of conscription in January 1916 and the end of the Battle of the Somme.[151] Notably, Willison added the caveat that, "we will not conscript, even though...the voluntary system may be unjust and unequal[.]"[152]

As noted above, Canadian enlistment was higher in urban areas and among Canadian and especially British-born Anglophones, including Irish Catholics,[153] and lower in rural, Francophone, and non-British immigrant communities. Recruitment was especially poor in Quebec, where only 2.4 percent of the population volunteered compared to over 7 percent in Ontario and the West.[154] Of course, as Oscar Skelton noted, Quebec had "a much smaller proportion of British-born citizens...city dwellers, and...men of military age."[155] The Dominion's military, moreover, with the exception of the Francophone Royal 22e Régiment, was a staunchly Anglo institution.[156] Yet other factors were at work. "There is not in Quebec," Skelton continued:

> the racial sympathy, the personal relations with the United Kingdom which have counted so largely in...the English-speaking provinces...Quebec has always boasted of its loyalty to the British Crown, but its loyalty has been passive...Well and good, if it were Canadian, but unfortunately a large number of its people prefer to be merely 'Canadien.' [...] In addition...weight must be given to the open anti-recruiting campaign of Mr. Bourassa and his lieutenants.[157]

Indeed, Bourassa inveighed against French-Canadian support for Britain's imperial wars and warned that Anglo-Canadians' sympathies as "citizens of a world-scattered empire" threatened national unity.[158] As ever, Wilfrid Laurier sought to conciliate Anglo and French-Canadians; rousing enlistment in Quebec while guarding against Bourassa. But in 1916 his task became near-impossible when Manitoba abolished bilingual schools and debate over Ontario's Regulation 17, which curtailed

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[149] *TN*, 5 July 1916.
[150] Willison, *Great War*, p. 8.
[151] Wood, *Militia Myths*, p. 233.
[152] Willison, *Great War*, p. 9.
[153] Mark McGowan, "Between King, Kaiser, and Canada: Irish Catholics in Canada and the Great War, 1914-1918," in David Wilson (ed.) *Irish Nationalism in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), ch. 5.
[154] Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, I, p. 235.
[155] Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 24:1 (1916), p. 135.
[156] Wood, *Militia Myths*, p. 248.
[157] Skelton, "Current Events," pp. 135-7.
[158] Henri Bourassa, *'Win the War' and Lose Canada* (Montreal: Le Devoir, 1917), p. 12.

French-language instruction in public schools, reached a fever pitch.[159] Legally, Ontario was obliged to support Catholic schools, not Francophone instruction. But the controversy provided ammunition for Bourassa:

> the backward and essentially Prussian policy of the rulers of Ontario and Manitoba gives us an additional argument against the intervention of Canada in the European conflict. To speak of fighting for the preservation of French civilisation in Europe while endeavouring to...oppress the national minorities in Canada, is...nothing but odious hypocrisy.[160]

Laurier, for his part, deprecated the idea of imposing French across 'Greater Ontario' and knew that "des prétentions nationalistes...sont exploitée par les extrémistes de l'anglo-saxonisme[.]"[161] Yet even his liberal allies were outraged. "Another reason, or excuse," for low *Quebecois* enlistment, Oscar Skelton wrote, was "the alleged persecution of French-Canadians in Ontario; an assertion wildly exaggerated, and hardly pertinent, if true."[162] French-Canadians, John Dafoe seethed, "think that they have a right to impose their will throughout the length and breadth of Canada."[163] Anglo-Canadians saw *Nationaliste* complaints as a distortion of Confederation and an excuse for 'slackerism.' Worse still, Ontario's Liberal opposition, led by Toronto lawyer Newton Rowell (1867-1941), refused to defend the French minority.[164] Laurier, then, was in a familiar position: if he acquiesced, he faced *Nationaliste* attacks; if he intervened, 'Greater Ontario' liberals would conclude that he had abandoned provincial rights and surrendered to Bourassa.[165] In the latter scenario, Dafoe warned, "the Liberal party...will blow up."[166] Nonetheless, Laurier introduced a moderately-worded motion at Ottawa urging Ontario to conciliate its minority. The Lapointe Resolution was predictably defeated and the 'Ontario Schools Question' resolved when the Privy

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[159] Cook, *Dafoe and the Free Press*, pp. 69-71; Dutil, "Against Isolationism," pp. 104-14.
[160] Quoted in Hawkes (ed.), *Canadian Nationalism and the War*, pp. 29-30.
[161] LP/C-909/192097, Laurier to Roy (copy), 15 June 1916.
[162] Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 24:1 (1916), p. 137; Skelton, *The Language Issue in Canada*, pp. 10-15, 25-31; GWP/B2004/0010/006/18, Murray Bay Revisited [1918]; George Wrong, "The Bi-lingual Question," in *The New Era in Canada*, pp. 229-59.
[163] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Cote (copy), 6 April 1916.
[164] Bothwell, *Ontario*, p. 106; Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, pp. 257-8.
[165] LP/C-909/191735, Rowell to Laurier, 26 April 1916.
[166] CSP/204/160906/2, Dafoe to Sifton, 7 May 1916; TNA/TT/ED/GGD/1, Willison to Robinson, 9 June 1916

Council upheld Resolution 17.[167] But the parliamentary vote was ominous: French-Canadians supported the resolution while Western Liberals defied Laurier. As the war raged, Canada's racial antagonism re-emerged.

II

In this context, liberals in Toronto and the West concluded that a 'national' or coalition government was necessary. Between Laurier's apparent appeasement of Quebec and Borden's irredeemably corrupt ministers, neither party inspired confidence. At Ottawa, John Dafoe complained, "Both sides...were bent on playing the old party game...just as though we were not in the third year of the greatest war that has ever been seen."[168] In Toronto, George Wrong informed him, "We are quietly preparing...for a national government when the right moment shall arrive."[169] "If Brown and Macdonald could sink their differences...to bring about Confederation," Dafoe replied, "Sir Wilfrid and Sir Robert...might be able to loyally combine for a far greater purpose."[170]

But Borden hesitated. Despite pressure from Toronto Conservatives like Joseph Flavelle,[171] he believed that his government prosecuted the war "more effectively than would be possible under...a Coalition Government."[172] John Willison agreed and accurately assessed the situation: "the advocates of National Government...urge concentration upon the war, deplore partisan controversy and oppose a general election. They are not united upon conscription, or upon any National or Imperial programme."[173] Willison's real concern, however, was that a coalition with Laurier meant an effective French-Canadian veto over the war effort. As he exclaimed to Flavelle: "bow to Quebec I will not...I am not willing to have my son killed in France to make a French triumph in the

[167] Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, p. 257-61.
[168] CSP/205/161401/14-15, Dafoe to Sifton, 12 February 1917.
[169] JDP/M-73, Wrong to Dafoe, 19 December 1916.
[170] GWP/B2003/005/014/31, Dafoe to Wrong, 12 December 1916.
[171] RBP/C-4319/40393-4, Flavelle to Borden, 13 December 1916
[172] WP/4/32/2492, Borden to Willison, 2 February 1917.
[173] TNA/BNS/3, Willison to The Times, Memorandum re: Toronto politics, 8 February 1917; RBP/C-4319/40441, Willison to Borden, 26 January 1917.

Dominion."[174] Indeed, it was clear that "Willison and others" were "trying desperately to fire the heather in Ontario by attacks upon...Laurier as a French-Canadian."[175] Laurier, on the other hand, saw the coalition movement as an anti-French Toronto scheme[176] - a view reinforced when Newton Rowell urged him to join "a truly National Government."[177] Toronto Liberals, Laurier replied, simply did

> not want to entrust the direction of affairs to a leader of French origin...The very fact that you and so many of our friends in Toronto are looking to a coalition government is abundant proof that my usefulness is gone...There are many questions looming up...[and] you cannot expect me to join this or any other government unless I knew at once where...[it] would stand.[178]

This was almost certainly a reference to conscription, the implications of which were widely understood. "It may be that we shall have to attempt some form of conscription," Willison admitted. "Undoubtedly we would have trouble in Quebec[.]"[179] Henri Bourassa was more explicit: "Personally, I think [conscription] would be preferable to...enlistment by intimidation, threat and blackmail. [But] [t]here are some who think that the recruiting officers would be received by gun shots in more than one place in Quebec."[180] Borden, however, soon realised that a partisan government could not impose conscription and he approached Laurier with a coalition offer.[181] But Laurier had much to lose. On one side, Liberals in Ontario and the West, most notably John Dafoe, pressured him to accept.[182] On the other, he staunchly opposed conscription. First, it was fundamentally illiberal. "I am of the school of Sir John Simon," he wrote with reference to the British Liberal anti-conscriptionist, "and I have no intention of changing my moorings."[183] Second, as he explained to Newton Rowell:

> [C]onscription...[will] create a line of cleavage...for which I will not be responsible...[and] if I were to waver...I would simply hand over the province of Quebec to the extremists...The only solution...[is] an appeal to the people...either in the form of a referendum or an election...[and] whatever influence I

[174] Quoted in Clippingdale, *Willison*, p. 312.
[175] CSP/204/160906/9, Dafoe to Sifton, 17 October 1916; JDP/M-73, Wrong to Dafoe, 30 March 1917.
[176] LP/C-911/194371, Laurier to Lemieux, 4 January 1917.
[177] LP/C-911/194598-9, Rowell to Laurier, 20 January 1917.
[178] LP/C-911/194600, Laurier to Rowell (copy), 23 January 1917.
[179] WLGP/10, Willison to W.L. Grant, 30 December 1916.
[180] HBP/M-721, Bourassa to Gregory (copy), 24 November 1916.
[181] TNA/TT/ED/GGD/1, Willison to Robinson, 11 June 1917.
[182] LP/C-913/195818-9, Dafoe to Laurier, 30 May 1917; C-913/195789-90, Rowell to Laurier, 29 May 1917
[183] WDGP/3/1916-19, Laurier to Gregory, 19 May 1917.

> may have will be employed in pleading to the Quebec people that the question is settled by the verdict of the majority[.][184]

Though it was clearly "impossible to preserve the unanimity of the [Liberal] party on the question of conscription," Laurier rejected Borden's offer, refused a further extension of parliament, and prepared to fight the long-feared wartime election.[185] In retrospect, Dafoe believed that "Laurier...had two definite purposes: to win back, if he could, the prime ministership of Canada; but in any event to establish his position forever as the unquestioned, unchallenged leader of his own people."[186]

In response, Toronto Liberals rebelled and publicly endorsed conscription. John Willison, who remained close to leading Liberals, reported to Borden: "I have been very much inside the Liberal revolt in Toronto...some of those most active...have finally separated from the Liberal leader."[187] Though an Ontario Liberal convention supported Laurier, its leaders consolidated behind Borden. Meanwhile at Ottawa, the Conservative Government - with Anglo-Canadian Liberal votes - passed the Military Service Act authorising conscription and the Wartime Elections Act, disenfranchising recent immigrants from Germany and Austria-Hungary while granting suffrage to the mothers, wives, and sisters of Canadian soldiers.[188] But the conscriptionist alliance was not yet a coalition, and Western Liberals remained attached to Laurier and wary of urban Ontario.[189] John Dafoe and Clifford Sifton, however, defected to Borden and marshalled the Western Grain Growers towards a conscriptionist "union government."[190] As Dafoe later explained: "The Unionist Liberals...said truly that [Laurier] was the prisoner of forces which would control any government he might form...The political situation in Quebec was dominated by the nationalist movement which by its strength in the province, sought to dominate the Dominion's political situation."[191] Bourassa, he

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[184] LP/C-913/195792-3, Laurier to Rowell (copy), 2 June 1917.
[185] WDGP/3/1916-19, Laurier to Gregory, 4 June 1917.
[186] Dafoe, *Laurier*, pp. 156-7.
[187] RBP/C-4219/40504-5, Willison to Borden, 12 June 1917.
[188] Clippingdale, *Willison*, p. 321; Cook, *Warlords*, p. 111-12; English, *The Decline of Politics*, pp. 131-9.
[189] RBP/C-4464/193362-5, Dafoe to Borden, 29 September 1917.
[190] WP/4/32/2516, Borden to Willison, 31 August 1917.
[191] Dafoe, *Sifton*, pp. 440-41.

concluded, would be power behind Laurier. Finally, by the end of October an alliance was struck. An elated John Willison reported to London:

> Borden was helped very greatly by Dafoe...I say this gladly because Dafoe and I have not always pulled together. Sifton, too, was useful...There is a way in which I have personal affection for Laurier. From no man have I received more consideration...In any event, I feel that Laurier was a danger to the empire and I fought to prevent his return to office and to destroy the ascendancy of Quebec in Canadian affairs...[T]he union of Eastern Conservatives and Western Liberals in the Cabinet is of all things the best that could have happened for the war[.][192]

III

Willison's assessment illustrated the staunch Britannic nationalism that underpinned the Unionist coalition. For Unionists, as John Darwin writes: "conscription...marked the readiness of English Canadians to identify their contribution to the imperial war effort as the acid test of [Britannic] nationhood at whatever the cost in racial friction."[193] Eminent Canadian historian Ramsay Cook similarly explained liberal defections from Laurier. But Cook's corollary - that Laurier, and by implication anti-Unionists generally, viewed the war in 'colonial' terms - is less convincing.[194] While Laurier initially conceived Canada's role as a British auxiliary by 1917 he was "anxious...to send as many men as the country can afford."[195] Even British politicians, as Oscar Skelton noted, had not "attempted to apply conscription to Ireland."[196] Moreover, with the liberal imperialists in power at Ottawa and Milner reigning in Whitehall, imperialism appeared ascendant. How could Laurier and anti-Unionist liberals square the circle of total war, Britishness, anti-imperialism, and national unity?

One answer that has seemingly escaped historians - who usually, and with good reason, explain the Conscription Crisis in terms of the Anglo-French antagonism - lies in the ideological divisions *within* 'Greater Ontario' liberalism. In the first place, Laurier perceived, support for conscription emanated from liberal imperialists: "Ontario is no longer Ontario: it is again the old small province of Upper Canada...governed by a junta sitting at London, known as 'The Round Table'

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[192] TNA/TT/ED/GGD/1, Willison to Dawson [Robinson], 28 October 1917.
[193] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 338.
[194] Ramsay Cook, "Dafoe, Laurier, and the Formation of Union Government," in Carl Berger (ed.), *Conscription 1917* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 36-8.
[195] LP/C-913/195792, Laurier to Rowell, 2 June 1917.
[196] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 509.

with ramifications in Toronto...As to the Tories, I am not surprised...but for the Grits, oh! For the old spirit of sturdy Liberalism which still prevailed in my youth!"[197] Liberal imperialism, however, held no attraction to Western Liberals or autonomists. Laurier's key insight, therefore, was connecting Unionism to debates over Dominion nation-building. "The situation," he continued with reference to the Manitoba Schools Question: "is very different from what it was in 1896. Then...we stood strongly on the Liberal doctrine of provincial rights...Now...the government is going to introduce a policy which is at variance with all the traditions of Liberalism[.]"[198] Conscription, he argued, was being imposed over the unanimous and visceral opposition of Quebec by men ostensibly dedicated to provincial rights as the basis of Confederation. But he overlooked one critical element of the Ontario liberal tradition: the Grit commitment to majoritarian democracy and a *de facto* Anglo-ascendancy outside Quebec. Indeed, the Unionist alignment of John Dafoe and Clifford Sifton with John Willison recalled their Grit-inspired crusades for Anglo-Saxon majority rule in relation to separate Catholic schools. And when the Anglo majority was inflamed with Britannic nationalism the inevitable result was a clash with Quebec. As Dafoe's *Free Press* acidly remarked: "Even majorities have rights in this country."[199]

Liberal Unionism, then, drew upon the Anglo-Saxonist and majoritarian aspects of Grit liberalism to split the autonomist ranks. In this light, we can discern the broad ideological underpinnings of the 'Laurier Liberal' opposition: a Whiggish liberalism and a 'Gladstonian' Britishness premised on racial conciliation and minority rights. Of course, conscription and Unionism were not synonymous and Laurier acquiesced to pro-conscription Liberals if they supported a referendum. Perhaps surprisingly, W.D. Gregory was one such Liberal. Though modern war, he argued, made conscription necessary, he believed that under democratic control it in fact restrained "belligerent tendencies." This was, in a sense, an anti-militarist argument for conscription. But Gregory's concerns over the "grave elements of danger...in Quebec," and his radical anti-imperialism

[197] Quoted in Ibid., p. 510.
[198] Ibid., p. 511.
[199] Quoted in Cook, *Dafoe and the Free Press*, p. 77.

contributed to his remaining a 'win-the-war' Liberal.[200] W.L.M. King was more conflicted. Initially, he supported conscription and made overtures to Unionism; in the end, he opposed conscription and remained a Liberal, partly to position himself as Laurier's successor.[201] Throughout, however, King maintained that his determination was "to see the war through with the utmost loyalty...to the British flag...[and] the principles which have made the flag the symbol of liberty it is."[202]

Oscar Skelton and John Ewart, though, more clearly illustrated the ideological divide over conscription. Ewart was the most uncompromising. As over the trial of Louis Riel and the Manitoba Schools Question he resolutely defended the French-Canadian minority and upheld the Whig vision of a tolerant, bi-racial Confederation.[203] Like Laurier, moreover, Ewart believed that the Round Table was responsible for reducing "Canada to such a disastrous cleavage."[204] He was especially incensed by references to 'Imperial resources,' which he believed betrayed an imperialist conspiracy to re-subordinate the Dominions under the guise of wartime cooperation.[205] Yet as historian Douglas Cole emphasised, this did not alter Ewart's belief in the righteousness of the war or the necessity of a "win-the-war policy" short of conscription.[206] But it did convince him that "our status as a Sister-Kingdom has become an impracticability." For this he indicted Alfred Milner, who was "reducing Canada to shameful subjugation." Milner, Ewart pronounced, was "the founder of THE REPUBLIC OF CANADA."[207]

Here it is tempting to conclude that Ewart, finally, evidenced an 'un-British' Canadian nationalism. The remarkable point, though, was that he reached his republican conclusion so regretfully, only under extreme circumstances, and later returned to his old advocacy of the 'Kingdom of Canada.'[208] In fact, this demonstrated the depth and variation of Britannic nationalism

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[200] LP/C-913/195926, Gregory to Laurier, 2 June 1917.
[201] English, *Decline of Politics*, pp. 134, 166.
[202] LP/C-914/197611, King to Laurier, 17 October 1917.
[203] HBP/M-721, Ewart to Bourassa, 21 January 1918.
[204] John Ewart, *The Disruption of Canada* (Ottawa, 1917), p. 30.
[205] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, II, p. 390; Ewart, *Disruption*, p. 27.
[206] Cole, "The Better Patriot," p. 264.
[207] Ewart, *Kingdom Papers*, II, pp. 390, 393.
[208] John Dafoe, "The Views and Influence of John S. Ewart," *CHR* 14:2 (1933), p. 137.

and the extent to which 'Britishness' was conceived in terms of parliamentary self-government. This was certainly Oscar Skelton's view, though he never questioned Canada's allegiance to the British Crown - a post-war "Canada First campaign" and a "pretty radical stand on...imperial relations" were sufficient. Nor did he doubt the necessity of total war and unconditional victory.[209] As Laurier's close confidant, however, Skelton consistently encouraged him to reject conscription: "Borden overshot the mark in assuming that the voice of Toronto is the voice of God."[210] "On a referendum," he added perceptively, "there would be a large anti-conscription minority in Ontario," concentrated in the Liberal-leaning countryside.[211] For Skelton, the key question was whether "conscription would yield sufficiently more men...to offset any possible danger to national unity."[212] He answered in the negative. Not only was conscription deeply illiberal, but the damage to Confederation would be devastating.[213] In this respect, Skelton epitomised the Ontario Whig tradition. As he explained to W.L. Grant:

> Abstractly, I think conscription the fairest solution...but in the actual situation of Canada...[and] [i]n view of Quebec opinion, I can't understand how the powers that be decided conscription could be explored...Laurier was condemned roundly for not trying to swing Quebec into line, but...if he were to support conscription now it would simply mean handing over a solid Quebec to Bourassa and...still greater extremists.[214]

Laurier's policy, he lamented, "was the real win-the-war policy, and...[those] who so lightly sacrificed national unity threw away our best war asset."[215] 'Laurier Liberals,' then, were fully committed to the war effort and represented a Whiggish, anti-imperial Britannic nationalism.

IV

Canada's 'Khaki election' was held on 17 December 1917 in the aftermath of the Battle of Passchendaele (26 October - 11 November), another slaughter in Flanders that cost over 16,000

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[209] LP/C-914/197833-5, Skelton to Laurier, 29 October 1917; Hillmer, *Skelton*, pp. 54-7.
[210] LP/C-913/195816, Skelton to Laurier, 30 May 1917.
[211] LP/C-913/196547-8, Skelton to Laurier, 7 August 1917; O.D. Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 25:2 (1917), p. 222.
[212] Skelton, "Current Events," p. 224.
[213] Hillmer, *Skelton*, p. 54.
[214] WLGP/9, Skelton to W.L. Grant, 13 August 1917.
[215] LP/C-913/196549, Skelton to Laurier, 7 August 1917

Canadian casualties.[216] For many, the war had became a national and quasi-religious crusade - blending Britannic, Canadian, and protestant imagery - in which faith had to be kept with those at the Front. In this context, Anglo-Canadian newspapers claimed that a vote for Laurier was a vote for Bourassa and the Kaiser, while farmers, French-Canadians, and 'slackers' were viciously attacked. Just in case, only weeks before the election Robert Borden promised farmers an exemption from military service. [217]

The result was a Unionist landslide, even before the inclusion of the active military vote of 92 percent in favour of the Union Government.[218] While the Maritime provinces voted roughly along the old party lines, west of the Ottawa River Laurier's Liberals won only 10 of 139 constituencies. In the West, including British Columbia and the Yukon, Unionists won 55 of 57 seats and averaged over 70 percent of the vote - thanks partly to the disenfranchisement of Liberal-leaning non-Anglo immigrants. In Ontario the result was marginally closer: Unionists captured 74 of the province's 82 seats, roughly 60 percent of the ballots in urban Ontario, and nearly 70 percent in Toronto. But historian Adam Crerar rightly highlights "the relative failure of the Union Government in rural southwestern Ontario" where the Liberal London *Advertiser* pronounced against conscription and Borden "won just 50.7 percent of the vote."[219] Indeed, Clifford Sifton had worried about rural Ontario,[220] while Arthur Glazebrook remarked prior to the election that the "Ontario farmer...is a queer creature."[221] The rank and file of Grit liberalism, who Laurier first wooed in the late-1880s, remained remarkably loyal to the Liberal leader under the circumstances. But the contrast with Quebec - where Liberals swept 62 of 65 constituencies with 73 percent of the vote - highlighted the extent of the Unionist triumph in 'Greater Ontario.'[222] Laurier's nightmare had come to pass. As Skelton wrote: "The election leaves us in a most deplorable condition, with the country split

[216] Cook, *Shock Troops*, p. 365.
[217] See for example WP/37/286/27551, Sifton to Willison, 7 November 1917; TNA/TT/ED/GGD/1, Willison to Robinson, 28 November 1917; Cook, *Warlords*, pp. 113-19.
[218] J.L. Granatstein, "Conscription," in *Canada and the First World War*, p. 68.
[219] Crerar, "Ontario," pp. 240-41.
[220] JDP/M-73, Sifton to Dafoe, 10 December 1917.
[221] AGP/Glazebrook to Milner (copy), 13 December 1917.
[222] For full results, see English, *Decline of Politics*, p. 195.

absolutely on racial lines."[223] "The Toronto Liberal idea of statesmanship," he added, "is to stir up a tempest and then call upon Sir Wilfrid...to quell it."[224]

For Unionists, however, it was an Anglo-Saxon triumph. Though Robert Borden faced what one Conservative called "an irreconcilable Ireland" in Quebec, he nonetheless revelled in the result.[225] "I do not think that any democracy has ever shown an equal spirit under so severe a test," he wrote to John Willison, "and the result will ever stand to the credit of Canada and of those who like yourself, contributed to it."[226] But while the Unionist victory ratified conscription it also annihilated what remained of Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal 'consensus.' The parliamentary Liberal party became a Quebec-based rump and 'Greater Ontario' Liberalism was rolled back to rural southwestern Ontario and a few liberal intellectuals. The nature of the defeat, moreover, was apparent in the role played by Laurier's old Grit allies, John Dafoe and John Willison. For both men, the result was an affirmation of Britannic nationalism, Greater British solidarity, and total commitment to the war effort in the face of French-Canadian opposition. Laurier, Willison wrote to Borden, had "become...'a spiritual alien'" in Anglophone Canada.[227] "There will be no rapprochement between the French-Canadians and the English-Canadians for this generation," Dafoe fumed to a French-Canadian Liberal: "the English-Canadians will administer Canada; and the French-Canadians will be a futile, sullen minority...French-Canadians have refused to play their part in this war - being the only known race of white men to quit...You can do precisely as you please; and we shall do whatever may be necessary."[228]

Conclusion

The Great War raged through 1918. The Bolshevik capitulation in the east allowed Germany to turn west, but while the British line bent it did not break. The Royal Navy continued to blockade Germany

[223] LP/C-915/198974, Skelton to Laurier, 18 December 1917.
[224] LP/C-916/199261, Skelton to Laurier, 1 January 1918.
[225] RBP/C-4332/54831, Gosnell to Borden, 20 December 1917.
[226] RBP/C-4428/149056, Borden to Willison (copy), 20 December 1917.
[227] RBP/C-4406/126462, Willison to Borden, 6 November 1917.
[228] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Cote, 1 January 1918.

and the spring offensive cost the German armies dearly. Soon hundreds of thousands of American 'doughboys' poured into Europe and the Allies gained a decisive upper hand. But the final months of the war were as bloody as ever. In the 'Hundred Days' "from August 8 to November 11, the Canadian Corps...suffered a devastating 45,835 casualties" - twice the proportion of their number in the British Empire forces.[229]

At home, unrest spread. During the German offensive Robert Borden reneged on his promise to exempt farmers from conscription. This "direct breach of faith"[230] fuelled the post-war rise of the United Farmers in Ontario and the Western-dominated Progressive party at Ottawa.[231] More ominous were rumblings of civil insurrection in Quebec. In late-March and early-April days of rioting rocked Quebec City and Borden's Government responded with Anglo-Canadian troops. Easter weekend 1918 witnessed violent clashes between soldiers and civilians. On both sides, Laurier lamented, "blind fools [and] miscreants are stirring up the people in Quebec, to violence and riot."[232] This was followed by a declaration of martial law and the imposition of rigid censorship.[233] As one supporter wrote to Laurier: "Surely Liberals in Parliament will not allow to go unchallenged...the recent drastic and extraordinary Order-in-Council...It is, of course, unnecessary to tell you...[about] the fundamental principles of British liberty and you will readily recall how Gladstone...[was] most outspoken in regard to...freedom of the press."[234] But under the War Measures Act there was little that Parliament, and still less the crippled Liberal party, could do. Though conscription resulted in an additional 24,132 Canadian soldiers at the Front and was, historian J.L. Granatstein maintains, a military necessity, it came at the cost of individual liberty and an enduring legacy of bitterness in Quebec.[235]

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[229] Cook, *Shock Troops*, p. 579.
[230] LP/C-917/200461, Laurier to Gregory (copy), 22 April 1918.
[231] Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, pp. 315-20.
[232] LP/C-917/200227, Laurier to Skelton, 31 March 1918.
[233] Cook, *Warlords*, p. 128-9.
[234] LP/C-917/200387, Boyd to Laurier, 20 April 1918 [emphasis in original].
[235] Granatstein, "Conscription," pp. 72-4.

Politically, 1918 was the nadir of the Liberal party. Yet Wilfrid Laurier was committed to "help and assist" the war effort: "I see no alternative. The fight must go on. Peace today would be a German peace, and after the experience of Russia, we know what a German peace means."[236] Moreover, he remained optimistic and conciliatory: "It has been my lot to go round the whole gamut of prejudices in Canada. In 1896 I was excommunicated by the Roman priests and in 1917 by the Protestant parsons. Let us take it cheerfully, however, and...continue the fight for the good cause."[237] Upon Laurier's return to Parliament Oscar Skelton noted his "good Canadianism and good Liberalism," and encouraged the old leader that "the issues of liberalism...will soon revive, and...not merely the rank and file but the abler leaders among the Liberal-Unionists will return to the fold then."[238] Laurier, for his part, wrote to W.L.M. King on the day of the Armistice: "The end...is almost incredible; but so it is. It is now time for the Liberals to look out and prepare for the active work that faces us."[239]

[236] LP/C-917/200230-31, Laurier to Skelton, 31 March 1918.
[237] WDGP/3/1916-19, Laurier to Gregory, 27 December 1917.
[238] LP/C-916/200135, Skelton to Laurier, 23 March 1918.
[239] LP/C-918/201794, Laurier to King (copy), 11 November 1918.

Conclusion

"...every British Dominion owes the memory of Laurier a statue in its parliament square."[1]
- J.W. Dafoe, 1922

I

The Union Government marked the political zenith of 'Greater Ontario.' At its core, the wartime coalition reflected the combined political and economic power of Ontario and the West in Confederation and the firm identification of Anglo-Canadians with the British Empire. With Wilfrid Laurier's Liberals reduced to a Quebec rump, the Unionist heartland of Ontario and the Prairies was only three constituencies shy of a parliamentary majority in its own right. Meanwhile, 'Greater Ontarian' wheat, cheese, pork, and munitions flowed into Britain as part of the booming 're-colonial' war economy.[2] By the close of the 'Laurier era' the old colony of Upper Canada and its vast western empire had emerged as the economic, demographic, and political centre of gravity in the 'senior' British Dominion.

Unionism thus epitomised, though it did not monopolise, Britannic nationalism: the conviction that Canada was a 'British nation' in North America and an integral part of Greater Britain. This idea, as the present thesis has endeavoured to prove, was central to Ontario liberal visions of Dominion nation-building. Indeed, in the mid-nineteenth-century Edward Blake and George Brown maintained that British-Americans, once they consolidated Confederation and established their prosperity, would "discharge the duties which appertain to us as free-born Britons."[3] As Brown, the liberal prophet of the 'neo-Ontario' beyond the Great Lakes, put it: "[T]here can be no doubt, that when the time comes in the history of any colony that it has...entered on a career of permanent progress and prosperity, it is only fair and right that it should contribute its quota to the defence of the empire."[4]

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[1] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 87.
[2] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 416-17, 468-9.
[3] Blake, *Blake at Aurora*, p. 10.
[4] Quoted in Mackenzie (ed.), *Hon. George Brown*, pp. 333.

By any measure, 'Greater Ontario' contributed its quota in the Great War. But while 'Laurier Liberals' embraced Britannic nationhood their views of conscription were tempered by concerns over national unity. Liberal Unionists, by contrast, uncompromisingly upheld the right of the Anglo majority to impose its will upon the Dominion; to win the war at all costs, including by the implementation of conscription over fierce opposition in Quebec. Here, in an updated 'Greater Ontario' form, was the old political and ideological divide between the Blake and Brown wings of Ontario liberalism: a 'Whig' minority concerned with racial conciliation and a 'Grit' majority prepared to assert its numerical superiority to 'liberate' Ontario's Anglo-Saxons from French-Canadian 'domination.'[5] Liberal Unionists thus drew upon the Grit tradition in their alliance with Conservatives; the Unionist caucus was an Anglo-Saxon and protestant "monolith," though the sudden influx of Presbyterians to the Government benches revealed its strong Liberal component.[6] Laurier Liberals, on the other hand, stood on the Whiggish ground of conciliation and compromise, illustrating the significance of Laurier's earlier association with Edward Blake.[7]

The Unionist triumph, moreover, demonstrated the potency of British 'race patriotism' among Anglo-Canadian liberals even as it divided the Dominion along racial lines. John Dafoe, for instance, whose antipathy towards Quebec over conscription was evidenced above, declared his satisfaction that the "self-governing British nations" had proved themselves "one and indivisible through the unimaginable strain of the great war."[8] In this context, there was little that Wilfrid Laurier could do to restrain the Britannic nationalist fervour of Anglo-Canadians. Though conservative historian Donald Creighton argued that the Liberal leader ought to have done more to convince Quebec of the merits of conscription, it is clear that Laurier perceived his role in terms of supporting the Imperial war effort to the utmost degree consistent with national unity.[9] Indeed, for

[5] See especially Willison, *Reminiscences*, pp. 97-8; Underhill, "Some Reflections on the Liberal Tradition," pp. 13-14.
[6] English, *Decline of Politics*, pp. 200-201.
[7] Neatby, *Laurier*, pp. 43-4.
[8] John Dafoe, *Empire Partnership: An Address to the Imperial Press Conference, Ottawa, August 6th, 1920* (Ottawa, 1920), pp. 3, 5.
[9] Creighton, *Canada's First Century*, p. 148.

decades Laurier argued that the chief danger to Confederation lay in the consolidation of racial and sectarian political parties centred in Ontario and Quebec.[10] His response to Unionism, then, was the same as in earlier periods of racial antagonism: to uphold the Liberals as the pan-Canadian party of a Gladstonian 'Britishness' premised on individual liberty, free trade, and British constitutional principles to which, he believed, 'Greater Ontario' liberals must eventually return.

II

The entry of the United States into the war further illustrated the complex emotions of Britannic nationalism. From 1914-17 American neutrality reinforced Anglo-Canadians' awareness of their difference from the Republic. Canadians were in the war because they were British; Americans were on the sidelines because they were not.[11] Though Anglo-Canadians hoped for American intervention they were nonetheless proud of the contrast between Canada's sacrifice and Washington's inaction.[12] "Undoubtedly the rather serious feeling of irritation to the States tends to consolidate Canadian feeling, just as the consciousness of French-Canadian failure helps to do the same thing," Arthur Glazebrook recorded. "But, even so, I would like to see the States come into the war if it were only to abolish [their] tradition of hostility to Great Britain."[13]

In fact, British and Canadian imperialists sought to "pave the way for a future 'pax Anglo-Americana.'"[14] "I am more and more satisfied," an aging George Parkin concluded in a representative assessment, "that a sympathetic understanding between the Motherland, the Great Dominions, and the United States will...benefit mankind."[15] Anglo-Canadians lauded pan-Anglo cooperation in international affairs and the prospect of greater influence at Washington.[16] There was, though, some

[10] See for example Laurier, "Speech on the Jesuits' Estates Bill," in *Laurier on the Platform*, pp. 522-3.
[11] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, pp. 430-31.
[12] See for example, GWP/B2003/005/008/43, diary, 11 July 1916; O.D. Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 24:1 (1916), pp. 145; Willison, *Great War*, pp. 2-6.
[13] AGP/Glazebrook to Milner (copy), 8 March 1917.
[14] BWP/13/6, Kerr to G.L. Beer (copy), 3 March 1916.
[15] GPP/37-42, Parkin to Kipling (copy), 11 October 1917.
[16] See for example, Borden, *The War and the Future*, pp. 76-87; Dudley Mills, "The English-Speaking Peoples," *QQ* 26:2 (1918), pp. 135-49.

difference between 'Laurier liberals,' who tended to emphasise the "moral force" of President Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924),[17] and liberal Unionists who deployed more explicitly Anglo-Saxonist language. "[T]he two great branches of the race," John Willison told an American audience in 1919, "were spiritually reunited in the great contest for the freedom of the world."[18] John Dafoe beseeched the 1920 Imperial Press Conference in the same vein: "[C]an we not count upon the friendship and co-operation of that great sister-nation kindred to ourselves...who are of us by virtue of their past and of their common sacrifice in the defence of Anglo-Saxon civilization?"[19]

On the whole, however, as historian C.P. Stacey recalled of his youth in Toronto, Ontarians "remembered the long cold years when Canadians were shedding their blood in Flanders and the United States was maintaining what seemed to them a callous...neutralism...In English Canada...wartime emotions strengthened the bond with Britain rather than the friendship with the Republic."[20] This points to the wisdom of Simon Potter's observation that post-Dominion historians overstated the "significance of constitutional markers...as milestones on the road to national independence."[21] In the Canadian case it counters the 'Nationalist' interpretation of post-war continentalism and the growth, at least among liberals, of an un-British nationalism.[22] To be sure, radical changes took place, including three pertinent to the themes explored in this thesis. First, there was new force to 'isolationist' arguments that Canada's post-war reconstruction should take precedence over European affairs and Imperial adventurism.[23] Second, in the 1920s the United States replaced Britain as Canada's leading export market while New York City challenged London as its main source of capital.[24] And third, Dominion representation in the British Empire Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, resulting in a separate seat at the League of Nations, reflected the

[17] LP/C-916/200058, Skelton to Laurier, 15 March 1918; C-917/200231-3, Laurier to Skelton, 31 March 1918.
[18] Willison, "Comrades in Arms," in *Partners in Peace*, p. 37.
[19] Dafoe, *Empire Partnership*, p. 11.
[20] Stacey, *Age of Conflict*, I, p. 234.
[21] Potter, *News and the British World*, pp. 211-12.
[22] See for example Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, pp. 36-9, 179-82; Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, ch. 6; Creighton, *Canada's First Century*, ch. 9.
[23] Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, pp. 77-9, 131-4.
[24] Norrie (ed.), *Canadian Economy*, pp. 287-92.

augmentation of Canadian sovereignty.[25] The Great War, George Wrong remarked in its aftermath, "involved the break-up of many states, the fall of dynasties, [and] the total collapse of political institutions...[but] in none of the victorious states have the changes been more remarkable than in...the British Empire."[26]

Yet the immediate post-war years were also characterised by important continuities, perhaps above all the notion that Canada was a British - indeed 'British-American' - nation. Ontario's new generation of radical liberal intellectuals, commonly identified as nationalists and North American isolationists, nevertheless upheld 'Britishness' and membership of the British Commonwealth as defining features of Canadian nationality.[27] The British world economy, moreover, became more tightly integrated following the post-war 'bust.' British capital investment recovered, the United Kingdom relied increasingly on Dominion exports, and 'Greater Ontario' remained a central component of the 're-colonial' system that reached its height with the adoption of Imperial preferential tariffs in 1932.[28] Finally, as historian Margaret MacMillan reminds us, though Robert Borden attained unprecedented recognition for Canada in global councils, the Dominion's post-war status was ambiguous.[29] Even after the ratification of the Statute of Westminster (1931), Canadians remained British subjects with the Privy Council as their highest court of appeal. Britannic nationalism and the British 'connection' thrived well into the mid-twentieth-century in what historians have called the 'Third British Empire.'[30]

III

[25] See for example Wigley, *Canada and the Transition to Commonwealth*.
[26] Wrong, "Canada and the Imperial War Cabinet," p. 10.
[27] R. Douglas Francis, "Historical Perspectives on Britain: The Ideas of Canadian Historians Frank H. Underhill and Arthur R.M. Lower," in *Canada and the British World*, pp. 309-21.
[28] Belich, *Replenishing*, pp. 416-17,
[29] Margaret MacMillan, "Canada and the Peace Settlements," in *Canada and the First World War*, pp. 379-408.
[30] John Darwin, "A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics," in Wm. Roger Louis (ed.), *OHBE, v. IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), ch. 3; W. David McIntyre, *The Britannic Vision: Historians and the Making of the British Commonwealth of Nations, 1907-48* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); John Herd Thompson, "Canada and the 'Third British Empire,' 1901-1939," in *Canada and the British Empire*, ch. 5.

The Unionist Government, however, barely survived the Peace Conference. With the war over, Wilfrid Laurier perceived as early as November 1918, political and ideological divisions began to re-emerge. As he explained to Oscar Skelton, there was a growing debate among Unionists as to

> whether Borden should, at the so-called Imperial cabinet, side with the protectionists or the free traders. The Liberal members, with the certain exception of Rowell...standing for free trade, whilst the Conservatives were equally strong for protection...it seems to me manifest that a big effort is going to be attempted to force protection over all the British Empire. The effort may fail of immediate realisation on account of the strong well of free trade in the United Kingdom...[But] I will be mistaken if here the Union government do not attempt to give a new lift to protection. The result will largely depend upon the vote of the farmers.[31]

Laurier's warning against Imperial protectionism proved a decade early. In the short-term, though, he accurately identified the nexus of trade and Imperial reform as the main fissure in the Unionist Government. If Unionism was to hold together, as John Willison recognised, it required compromise "between East and West and between Western Grain Growers and Eastern industrial and financial interests."[32] Such an agreement, however, was unlikely and Laurier emphasised the imperative for the Liberal party to re-establish its ties with agrarian leaders in Ontario and especially on the Prairies. Oscar Skelton drafted a radical 'Farmers' Platform' which met his approval, and the Liberals announced that their first national convention since 1893 would take place in 1919.[33]

Neither could the Imperial question be long ignored. At the Paris Conference the Dominions, led by Robert Borden, pushed the British Government to accept new precedents with respect to their autonomy in international relations.[34] Though inconclusive, the direction of travel was plain.[35] John Dafoe, who attended the Paris Conference with the Canadian delegation, believed that Borden, "once he got his bearings, took over the Laurier policies and widened them."[36] Indeed, Borden's conception of "the self-governing peoples of the British Empire"[37] bore close resemblance to

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[31] LP/C-918/201996-9, Laurier to Skelton, 25 November, 1918.
[32] LP/4/32/2538, Willison to Borden (copy), 15 October 1918.
[33] LP/C-918, 202000-1, Laurier to Skelton, 25 November 1918.
[34] MacMillan, "Canada and the Peace Settlements," pp. 387-8, 392-4.
[35] See for example WP/37/286/27562-4, Willison to Sifton (copy), 28 June 1921, Sifton to Willison, 30 June 1921.
[36] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 88.
[37] GWP/B2003/005/001/22a, Borden to Wrong, 14 May 1920; Borden, *Canadian Constitutional Studies*, pp. 96-141.

Laurier's idea of "nationhood within the Empire."[38] This points to the breadth of Britannic nationalism and the underlying sense of Britishness that united Anglo-Canadian liberals even after the war. Though Ottawa pushed the boundaries of Imperial diplomatic unity, 'Britishness' was not in doubt. But with the Dominions focused on reconstruction and autonomous membership of new international bodies, and the British Government preoccupied with the Great Power settlement, imperialist momentum stalled. For the Round Table, it was a precipitous decline. As John Willison lamented to Alfred Milner:

> one hardly knows where to find solid ground. I have never been in love with the theory of five equal nations. I fear that we have been putting too much emphasis on autonomy and not enough on Empire. There is a point at which we will turn either towards organic union or separation. If we put all the emphasis on the theory of equal nations the turning may not be in the direction we would like to go.[39]

Arthur Glazebrook was similarly impressed by public opinion. "An Imperialistic campaign at the present moment would be unwise," he admitted.[40] "We are in a rather queer state out here, but I am not really pessimistic because the country as a whole is undoubtedly overwhelmingly British."[41]

The decline of imperialism was related, in part, to the emergence of alternative visions of global order in the League of Nations and the concept of 'internationalism,' both of which drew substantially on Round Table ideas and propagandists and appealed to a younger generation of 'progressive' intellectuals.[42] In Canada, furthermore, there were few votes to be won in post-war schemes that threatened to commit Canadians to another overseas war, whether imperialist or internationalist.[43] Imperial federalism was dead, and regardless of the League's destiny liberal autonomists saw the post-war years as a triumph of Britannic nationalism.[44] "Canada's status," John

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[38] Skelton, *Laurier*, II, p. 292.
[39] WP/29/223/21901, Willison to Milner (copy), 5 December 1919.
[40] AGP/Glazebrook to Milner (copy), 24 November 1919.
[41] Ibid., 10 November 1919.
[42] See for example AMP/53/16, Milner to Willison (copy), 27 January 1924; Moore, "Liberal Imperialism in Australian Political Thought," pp. 71-2; Morefield, "'An Education to Greece,'" pp. 328-61; Susan Pederson, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 25-35; Casper Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism, 1880-1930: Making Progress?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), ch. 6.
[43] Bothwell, "The Canadian Isolationist Tradition," pp. 76-80.
[44] See for example O.D. Skelton, "Current Events," *QQ* 28:1 (1920), pp. 99-105; ODSP/10, O.D. Skelton, *Canada, the Empire, the League* (1920[?]).

Dafoe pronounced, was increasingly that of "an independent British nation."[45] In an indication of the new political climate Dafoe and Clifford Sifton joined John Ewart, W.D. Gregory, Oscar Skelton, and other autonomists in demanding "that Canada should assume...practical independence and carry on her own Foreign policy[.]"[46] Yet a renewed "'Canada First' movement," Dafoe affirmed to Ewart, "if not hijacked by "the professional Sinn Feiner and the French-Canadian with a marked anti-British racial bias," would be led by "people of unquestioned British stock and of known devotion to British constitutional principles. As you and I realize, ['Canada First'] is in no respect a break with the spirit of British traditions...and its success is essential to the continuance of the brotherly relationships which at present exist between the British nations."[47] By the early-1920s, therefore, liberal autonomists were increasingly confident in their promotion of Canadian independence within a 'Gladstonian' Greater Britain.[48]

IV

By mid-1919 the Unionist coalition began to disintegrate along lines forecast by Laurier. This reflected the artificiality of a coalition whose "spirit had passed with the war," as well as the scale of Robert Borden's political burden.[49] Exhausted by the war effort, he was deeply invested in the international status of the Dominions and their constitutional settlement with Britain. Yet his long absence in Paris during the turbulent months of post-war demobilisation seriously weakened the Government.[50] Against the backdrop of the post-war 'bust' - punctuated by continuing inflation, agrarian unrest, and the Winnipeg General Strike - Finance Minister Thomas White (1866-1955), one of the original 'Toronto Eighteen' Liberals, introduced a budget that maintained Canada's high tariffs.

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[45] JDP/M-73, Dafoe to Sifton (copy), 28 April 1920.
[46] WP/37/286/27564, Sifton to Willison, 30 June 1921. See also CSP/C-597/163780, Sifton to Ewart (copy), 27 February 1923; JEP/1/207-8, Ewart to Gregory (copy), 22 December 1920.
[47] JEP/1/212, Dafoe to Ewart, 7 January 1921.
[48] Dafoe, *Sifton*, pp. 460-78; ODSP/10, 'Canada and Foreign Policy: Address at Canadian Club Meeting [Ottawa], [21 January] 1922 [draft]'; Cook, *Dafoe and the Free Press*, pp. 128-45.
[49] Dafoe, *Laurier*, p. 180; Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, p. 321.
[50] See for example RBP/C-4206/4172-3, Dafoe to Borden, 21 December 1919, Borden to Dafoe (copy), 26 December 1919; English, *Decline of Politics*, pp. 206-11.

T.A. Crerar, the leader of the radical Western Grain Growers, resigned from the Government and by the end of the year the new farmer-led Progressive party was a political force in rural Ontario and the Prairie West.[51] Other Liberal Unionists, led by Laurier's Nova Scotian Finance Minister W.S. Fielding, quickly returned to the Liberal fold. An important exception, however, was Newton Rowell, who as a Toronto protectionist was more comfortable in the Unionist caucus, where he remained until Borden's own resignation in 1920.[52]

The Unionist Government thus foundered on the same 'Greater Ontarian' ground as Laurier's Liberal party, unable to bridge the gulf between the imperialist and protectionist tendencies of urban Ontario and the staunchly autonomist and free trade outlook of the agrarian West. In this respect, the Unionist disintegration highlighted the political, ideological, and regional divisions that this thesis has identified as the primary fault lines within the Ontario liberal tradition. Perhaps most important was the Grit-Whig divide discussed above, the origins of which can be traced to Upper Canada's moderate and radical Reformers. Indeed, when Ontario and Quebec came into serious political conflict - over 'rep by pop'; the execution of Louis Riel; the Manitoba, North-West, and Ontario Schools Questions; and the issue of conscription - it invariably involved antagonism between Grits and French Canadians. There was also the autonomist-imperialist divide, which in the inter-war years was complicated by isolationism and internationalism. Yet other issues intersected these divisions. Free trade, for instance, united Whig intellectuals with agrarian radicals against the commercial and financial interests of metropolitan Toronto liberals. At the same time, the principle of local autonomy was the bedrock of Ontario liberalism and the basis of fitful cooperation with French-Canadians stretching back to the United Province of Canada.[53] Though Ontario liberals invoked 'provincial rights' against French-Canadian and Tory 'domination,' whereas *Quebecois* leaders sought to guard their province against the whims of the Anglo majority, they

[51] Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, pp. 319-20.
[52] English, *Decline of Politics*, pp. 219-20.
[53] Careless, *Brown*, II, p. 12.

shared an interest in limiting both federal power within Confederation and the authority of Westminster over the Dominion.

Of course, as we have seen, the enormous influx of immigration during Canada's re-colonial 'boom' heightened the salience of racial identities and radical agrarian politics in the 'neo-Ontarian' Prairie West. At the same time, the urbanisation of 'Old' Ontario reinforced the protectionist impulses of Toronto liberals. The demographic and economic explosion of the 'Laurier era,' therefore, exacerbated existing tensions between the rural, agrarian 'west' and the urban, industrial 'east.' But these developments only further illustrated the significance of Wilfrid Laurier's achievement from the 1880s through 1917 - the maintenance of a political alliance that encompassed much of Quebec, rural Ontario, Toronto's Liberal elite, and the Prairie West, sustained by an informal ideological coalition based loosely on freer trade, provincial rights, and local autonomy within the British Empire. Though historians, as noted in the introduction, have tended to explain Laurier's success in Anglophone Canada in terms of his acquiescence to imperialism and the National Policy, this interpretation downplays global forces, liberal ideology, and Laurier's deep well of support among Anglo-Canadian Liberals. This thesis, on the contrary, re-evaluated 'Laurier era' politics and political thought in global and local contexts, illuminating the political and ideological 'consensus' by which Laurier anchored the Liberal party in 'Greater Ontario.' His success was premised on a liberal, 'Canada First' idea of Dominion nation-building: that is, on the consolidation of a decentralised Confederation, a 'Gladstonian' idea of 'Britishness,' freer Anglo-world trade, and the enhancement and affirmation of Canada's status as a 'British nation.' At its height between 1896-1911 the Liberal 'consensus' made inroads into Toronto where it appealed to liberal intellectuals and even, for a time, protectionists and imperialists.

In this light, we can more clearly perceive three central features of Canadian political thought during the 'Laurier era.' First and most significant was the extent to which ideas of 'Britishness' shaped the development of Canadian liberalism. Indeed, Laurier and his Anglo-Canadian liberal allies shared a series of normative assumptions about the Britannic character of Canadian

nationality, the significance of parliamentary self-government to conceptions of British citizenship, and Canada's place in the wider British world. Second, however, was the tension between civic or 'Gladstonian' conceptions of Britishness and those premised on racialism, whether Anglo-Saxonism or a British 'race patriotism' that more easily encompassed Britain's 'Celtic fringe.' This tension, as we have seen, fuelled periodic episodes of Anglo-French antagonism in the Dominion. But in a broader sense it also reflected a growing Empire-wide discourse over 'Britishness' and self-government with implications for territories like India and Ireland, for Indigenous-settler relations, and for the constitutional evolution of the British Empire into the Commonwealth. In Canada, moreover, the appeal of a civic Britannic nationalism should not be underestimated - it was an idea that, albeit awkwardly, unevenly, and with significant restrictions, allowed Anglo-Canadians, French-Canadians, and non-Anglo immigrants to imagine themselves as fellow-citizens.[54] This 'Gladstonian' Britishness endured in Canada until the 'end of Empire' and arguably laid the foundations for Canadian 'multiculturalism.'[55] Finally, it is evident that Laurier's support in 'Greater Ontario' was more robust than is commonly acknowledged and indeed was critical to his political success. Even following the Liberal defeats of 1911 and 1917 he maintained the votes and affection of a substantial minority of Anglo-Canadians, concentrated in rural southwestern Ontario, the Prairie West, and among liberal intellectuals. "The long ascendancy of Sir Wilfrid Laurier," John Willison conceded, "illustrates the...essential toleration of the Canadian people. He was French and Catholic and yet he commanded the affection and confidence of a national party in which Protestant elements were long dominant and to the last among the most devoted of his adherents."[56]

But when Unionism disintegrated the 'Laurier era' had already closed. On 17 February 1919 Wilfrid Laurier, the Dominion's Liberal leader of nearly 35 years, died at his home in Ottawa. It soon fell to W.L.M. King, whose inheritance included the 'solid Liberal' Quebec preserved by Laurier's stand against conscription, to take up the daunting task of re-assembling the Liberal 'consensus.'

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[54] See especially Thompson, "Canada and the 'Third British Empire,' 1901-1939," pp. 90-92, 101-102.
[55] See for example Peter Henshaw, "John Buchan and the British Imperial Origins of Canadian Multiculturalism," in *Canadas of the Mind*, pp. 191-213.
[56] Willison, "Comrades in Arms," p. 42.

Though King followed Laurier's advice and assiduously courted agrarian Progressives it was not until the Great Depression and the Second World War that his Liberals again commanded the parliamentary support of Ontario and the West.[57] In a certain sense, to paraphrase what historian H.C.G. Matthew wrote of Laurier's political hero W.E. Gladstone: "It is not difficult to see the latter part of [Laurier's] public life as a failure," with 60,000 Canadian dead in Europe, the Dominion cleaved along racial lines, Gladstonian liberalism in retreat, North American free trade unattained, and the Liberal party annihilated west of the Ottawa River.[58]

Yet in a broader view Laurier's success in 'Greater Ontario' was extraordinary. His ascent to the Liberal leadership in 1887 was met with incredulity - in the aftermath of the Riel execution it was unimaginable that a French-Canadian Roman Catholic could canvass votes from the staunchly British, Anglo-Saxon, and protestant Liberals of Ontario. Over the next three decades, however, he not only commanded their loyalty but presided over the realisation of much of their programme. By 1919 George Brown's vision of a new 'British-American nationality' with Ontario at its heart was effectively realised: the Dominion was a 'nation within the Empire'; friendly bilateral relations with the United States were firmly established; and Toronto increasingly served as the commercial and cultural capital of a 'neo-Ontarian' settler empire. Even the growing estrangement between the agrarian Prairies and urban Ontario, the steady defection of Anglo-Canadian Liberals - most notably Laurier's old friend and partner John Willison - between 1905-17, and the re-emergence of the Anglo-French antagonism during the Great War were consequences, in large measure, of the prosperity and self-confidence attained during the 'Laurier era.' Among Anglo-Canadian liberals there was no question that Sir Wilfrid Laurier, more than any other politician, helped to transform the British North American colonies into a 'British nation' and the British Empire into the British Commonwealth. "A Whig in temper and outlook," Willison eulogised in Laurier's obituary for *The*

[57] Bothwell et al., *Canada 1900-1945*, pp. 200-9, 400.
[58] Matthew, *Gladstone*, p. 639.

Times of London, "even his most hostile critics will agree that he was a great man, who served his Dominion and the Empire well."[59]

[59] [John Willison], "Sir W. Laurier," *The Times*, 18 February 1919.

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