



THE

Canadian Courier

THE NATIONAL WEEKLY

VOL. 7

Toronto, February 19th, 1910

No. 12



REFLECTIONS

BY THE EDITOR

CONSERVATIVES at Ottawa seem determined to proclaim that Sir Wilfrid Laurier is not an imperialist. Mr. Foster, in his clever address on the Navy Bill, clearly charged Sir Wilfrid with being in favour of Canadian independence. Said he:

"To-night when I put his record before him and challenge him as to whether or not as Prime Minister of this country he still believes and cherishes as its goal the independence of this country, I think this House will come to its own conclusions."

And Sir Wilfrid merely answered, "Hear, hear!"

This line of attack cannot possibly do the Opposition any good. It cannot serve any national purpose. It cannot promote any imperial interest. It cannot improve Canada's reputation with the other colonies or with the people of Great Britain. It is neither dignified nor rational. Sir Wilfrid's record will easily overcome such attacks among those who know him well; and while it may do his reputation harm among those outside the country who are not so well acquainted with him, it will do more harm to the good name of Canada.

SIR WILFRID has, like the rest of us, held opinions which he does not now hold, has made statements which he would not now make, and is undoubtedly as much a nationalist as he is an imperialist. Nevertheless he is an imperial statesman in the fullest sense of that term. If Mr. Foster were to make twenty such speeches, with the whole twenty full of biting and caustic innuendos, Sir Wilfrid could still command a hearty reception in any community of the British Empire which he cared to visit. It is to the credit of British common-sense, that it always takes a man for what he is, not for what someone says he is. General Louis Botha fought against the British troops in the South African war, but to-day he is premier of the Transvaal, and to-morrow will be, in all probability, premier of the South African Confederation.

Contrast with the present Conservative attack upon Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the conduct of King Edward VII when he heard of the recent accident to Professor Goldwin Smith. If there is any one man living in Canada who has persistently argued against the stability of Canada's connection with Great Britain, that man is Professor Goldwin Smith. Yet King Edward cables the Governor-General to express his regret for the accident which has befallen the venerable historian and essayist, and asks to be informed of his condition. It seems a pity that Mr. Foster has not more of that human sympathy, fine feeling, and breadth of diplomacy, possessed by his Royal master, King Edward VII. Had he these qualities in even a slight degree he would refrain from trying to construct a party advantage out of such aged and ill-chosen material.

NO one can defend the attitude of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Sir Richard Cartwright in 1891 and 1892. They were wrong, quite wrong. They were pessimistic and their pessimism subverted their judgment. But that is a by-gone. They have fully atoned for their lapse, as have the thousands of Canadians who followed them in their daily salaams toward Washington. They have since that time served their country faithfully and well. Sir Wilfrid, especially, has performed magnificent imperial services such as Mr. Foster can never hope to equal. Therefore let Mr. Foster forget some things, even as there are some events in his own career which he is glad to have the general public forget. Political life in this country is distressing enough without adding charges of personal disloyalty and deception.

IT is not the province of this journal to defend or attack either political party. It is not for us to say that the country would be better governed by Sir Wilfrid Laurier than by Mr. Borden. Nevertheless we frankly admit that the longer the naval policy is discussed,

the more convinced we are that the Opposition attack upon the Government's proposal has not been well planned. It is quite true, and we cannot see why the Government does not

more frankly admit it, that the authorities in Great Britain were anxious to see a system of direct contributions inaugurated. It is also quite true, Liberal statements to the contrary notwithstanding, that Canada's present proposals did not meet with the approval of the British representatives at the Defence Conference last summer. It is also quite true, according to our view of the course of events, that the Government is now willing to go much farther in meeting the British view than it was even eight months ago. The Opposition have accomplished something. They have forced plans for a larger Canadian navy than was first intended and have so forced the pace of public opinion that the "speed" of Canada's contribution has been materially increased. While they have accomplished something, they might have accomplished it without trying to cast aspersions on the ability of Canada to construct warships and to equip and man successfully a naval unit. They might have argued more effectively for an "emergency" contribution had they cast fewer aspersions upon the proposed "tin-pot" navy, or "tin-pan navy" as an angry subscriber to the Canadian Courier describes it in a recent communication.

SIR FREDERICK BORDEN rather took the wind out of the Opposition's sails when he read the cable from the Australian Government to the effect that Australia's naval unit cannot be used in an imperial struggle without the consent of the parliament of that colony. The Australian fleet does not pass automatically into the hands of the British authorities on the declaration of war. This, of course, does not prove that Canada is right in adopting a similar provision against automatic transfer, but it kills the argument that Australia is less independent than Canada.

SIR FREDERICK also made clearer the details of the Government's proposals. There will be two training ships, one on the Atlantic and one on the Pacific. These two have been purchased from the Admiralty and will be here shortly. The *Rainbow* is not as large as the *Niobe*, but the latter will carry a crew of 600 men. While these vessels are training Canadian officers and men, the work of building the new fleet will be proceeded with either here or in Great Britain. Ten vessels will be constructed at a cost of ten or twelve million dollars. In addition, a naval college will be built and equipped. The total cost for the first five years will be about as follows:

<i>Rainbow</i> , bought from Admiralty	\$ 1,000,000
<i>Niobe</i> , bought from Admiralty	1,075,000
Naval college and barracks	715,000
Maintenance first year	1,250,000
" second year	1,500,000
" third year	1,700,000
" fourth year	2,250,000
" fifth year	3,686,000
Cost of four cruisers and six destroyers	12,000,000

Total cost in five years\$25,176,000

Thus the government has undertaken to spend at least the value of two Dreadnoughts within five years. Surely this should be sufficient to satisfy even the most ardent anti-German in the country. Surely it will fulfil any obligation of this country to contribute to imperial defence, coupled as it will be with probably a hundred millions spent upon new canals and new railways. To add to this an "emergency" vote of twenty-five millions of dollars for the purchase of two Dreadnoughts would be navalism gone mad. Surely rampant navalism would be as disastrous nationally as rampant militarism.

According to the *Toronto Mail and Empire* the total cost per annum will be \$7,000,000. Judging by past experiences this will be more nearly correct than the government's estimate of \$4,000,000.