

In 1895, an Order-in-Council divided the Canadian North into the provisional districts of Ungava, Mackenzie, Yukon, and Franklin (see map 4). The boundaries set out for the District of Franklin constituted a public claim⁸ to the entire archipelago, since all known islands were included in it. Unfortunately, the origins of this bold move remain almost completely obscure. The memorandum from Minister Daly to the Privy Council bears a Department of the Interior file reference, 37906. Although this file still exists, a note dated 6 February 1897 reveals that all the material on the far northern districts was removed and placed on another file, 389977. File 389977 later disappeared.⁹ The documents remaining in file 37906 are concerned almost exclusively with reasons for altering the boundaries of the District of Keewatin and the District of Assiniboia. Internal political factors, therefore, appear to have been the main force behind the 1895 Order, which dealt with the older districts as well as the new ones.

However, northern sovereignty was certainly a matter for concern at the time, and in 1887 geologist George Dawson (fig. 1) – later a key figure in sovereignty discussions – had emphasized that giving an official name to, and defining the boundaries of, the Yukon River region would serve to distinguish it clearly in the public mind from Alaska (doc. 43). A similar logic may have been applied to the entire North. To what extent the Order was intended to extinguish any possible American claim to Grinnell Land must remain a matter for speculation.

Problems with the details of the 1895 Order became apparent only a few months after it was approved, yet the production of a new Order was delayed until the end of 1897. In the summer of 1896, Wilfrid Laurier's Liberals came to power. Although prodded by Burgess, the acting Minister of the Interior, Richard Scott, was not inclined to take action on northern matters (docs 73, 74). It was widely rumoured that the Liberals intended to disband the NWMP, and therefore Comptroller White made only cautious recommendations about the Yukon (docs 75, 76). When Clifford Sifton (fig. 8) became Minister of the Interior, one of his first acts was to remove Burgess as deputy minister and replace him with one of Sifton's own cronies, James Smart. Sifton soon displayed a vigorous interest in the Yukon, but other northern issues failed to catch his attention until a few years later (see below).

In 1896 and 1897, George Dawson – who by then was the director of the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC) – emerged as the leading advocate of action in the Far North. The Minister of Marine and Fisheries, Louis Davies, responded to Dawson's concerns about American whalers in Hudson Bay by sending out Canada's first northern sovereignty expedition. The expedition's main purpose was to assess the navigability of Hudson Strait, but the orders to the leader, William Wakeham, stated forcefully that "the fact that all the Territories are

⁸ The Order was published in the *Canada Gazette*, 19 October 1895, pp. 683-685.

⁹ The disappearance may have happened before 1904, since W.F. King does not seem to have had access to the file when writing his report (see below).