

THE PRIME MINISTER'S PLEDGE

This is the first reference, so far as I am aware, made to Ottawa as the Washington of the North by the present First Minister, or any other public man. Three years passed and then Mr. Laurier and his friends assumed the reins of office. After the re-election of the new ministers, Mr. Laurier arrived in Ottawa on August 5, 1896, to undertake the onerous duties of the position of Prime Minister. He was presented with an address of welcome by the citizens of Ottawa, and in response thereto spoke as follows:-

"It shall therefore be the duty of the new Administration to try and encourage literature, letters, arts and science, and to make Ottawa the seat of learning, of arts and letters, of the Dominion of Canada. (Cheers). I have said elsewhere that I wished (and in my estimation it ought to be) to make Ottawa the Washington of the North. I have not forgotten having said this; I intend to live up to it as far as I can. It is part of the patriotism of any nation to be proud of its capital. If you go to France you will see that for a Frenchman, wherever he lives, the pride of his heart is the good old city of Paris. If you go to the other side of the line, you will know that the pride of every American is the City of Washington, and they say, by-and-bye, although it is supposed that Paris is the jewel of the earth, Washington shall be a finer city than Paris itself. I do not suppose we can excel these two cities, but it shall be our aim and effort to make Ottawa a capital of which every Canadian shall be proud (Cheers). It is the aim and purpose of this Liberal Administration to make Canada such a country that whenever a man leaves her shores to go to Europe, to England, France, Germany or Italy, it shall be the pride of his heart not only to think, but to proclaim aloud, 'I am a Canadian.' (Loud cheers)" (Toronto Globe, August 6th, 1896.)

These two extracts shall be my text to-night. It would take much digging and delving in the civic archives and in the Departments on the Hill to give you a succinct narrative of the negotiations which have led to the present relations between the city and the Government. The information would be of value, but I do not think I should be serving the purposes of this Club if I were to occupy your time in alluding to matters which are hardly germane to my subject. On the contrary, I feel that I should be rendering you a greater service if my observations relate more to present-day conditions, so that they may be helpful, should the occasion arise, sooner or later for a readjustment of the existing agreement between the citizens of Ottawa and the Federal Authorities. Present conditions hinge largely upon the Dominion Act of 1899 constituting the Ottawa Improvement Commission, and it is to this statute, the circumstances leading up to it, and the problems arising out of it, that I desire more particularly to invite your attention.

