

to push the matter, there were no further official maps showing the sector lines to the Pole. Patterson's appointment was renewed in 1911 and later years,²⁹ but the result of his inquiries remains a mystery. By the time the Laurier era ended with Robert Borden's September 1911 election victory, the Arctic was no longer a pressing concern: the northern whaling industry was in severe decline, while relations with the United States were excellent, leaving no reason to fear any American threat. The new Prime Minister brought Bernier's voyages to an end.

Within two years of Borden's election, however, another ambitious explorer asked for Canada's aid. Vilhjalmur Stefansson aspired to discover the "Arctic continent" which some theorists believed would be found west of the Parry Islands.³⁰ During a visit to Ottawa in February 1913, he pointed out to the Prime Minister that, if Canada contributed to his expedition, he could raise the Canadian flag on the new land. But if he had only American funding, he would be obliged to raise the Stars and Stripes. Borden decided that Canada would bear the entire cost, and Stefansson's American supporters withdrew (doc. 201). Plans were made for extensive scientific work, much of which was to be carried out by members of the GSC (see doc. 205). During the course of the expedition, Stefansson's cavalier attitude towards his official orders, and his free spending with government money, produced animosity between the leader and the scientists.

Stefansson did not emphasize the fact that the unknown land might lie west of the 141st meridian, and Canadian officials were under the impression that all his explorations would be carried out directly to the north of mainland Canada (see docs 199, 200). Even though the sector theory had never formally been endorsed, it seems to have been taken for granted in Ottawa that Canada would not claim any new land beyond the 1897 sector lines. As it turned out, Stefansson's discoveries all lay well to the east of the 141st meridian. But the expedition's ship, the *Karluk*, was caught in the ice, drifted far to the west, and sank near Wrangel Island off the coast of Siberia. The survivors spent several months on Wrangel Island, from which they occasionally thought they saw land to the north. When Stefansson heard this news, he planned a journey over the ice towards Wrangel – a plan that horrified officials in Ottawa (doc. 209). Stefansson was prevented from setting out by severe illness. He returned south in late 1918, bent on securing more government money for a new expedition. Stefansson's determination to claim both Wrangel Island and the supposed continent to the north of it would have major implications for future Canadian policy. However, the ultimate effect of his proposals was the opposite of what he hoped for.

²⁹ Orders-in-Council 1911-929, 1 May 1911; 1912-1513, 1 June 1912; 1913-1391, 10 June 1913. LAC, RG 2, vols 1012, 1039, 1065.

³⁰ For the origin of this theory, see R.A. Harris, "Evidences of Land near the North Pole," *Report of the Eighth International Geographic Congress, 1904* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1905), pp. 397-406.