

## CHAPTER THREE: CANADIAN NATIONALISM AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE

The Canada of 1885 was composed of two distinct parts, French and English Canada. Although there were English-Canadians in Quebec, and French enclaves within the English provinces, the division was essentially a geographic one. In English Canada, there were strong cultural and political links with Britain, while, in French Canada, there existed a view of Canada quite different from the rest of the country. It did not automatically subscribe to the idea that British and Canadian interests were inextricably linked to one another, and that British imperial policies were always in the best interests of Canada.

Among many English politicians, there were concerns that as the country developed, the provinces and territories outside Quebec should remain English and Protestant, limiting the French-Catholic influence to the boundaries of Quebec. These sentiments were most evident in D'Alton McCarthy's campaign to extinguish French minority rights in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. This did little to strengthen the French-English partnership within Confederation

The election of a Liberal government under Wilfred Laurier led to policies aimed at a conciliation of French and English interests in Canada. He confided as much to a close associate:

*“My object is to consolidate Confederation and to bring our people, long estranged from each other, gradually to become a nation. This is the supreme issue. Everything else is subordinate to that idea.”*

The Liberals managed to effect compromise solutions that were palatable to both sides, and Laurier, with considerable effort, came up with equitable solutions to issues such as the Manitoba Schools controversy. For Laurier, however, it would prove to be far more difficult to advance Canadian national interests within the British Empire. Many English Canadians exhibited an almost blind acceptance of British imperial policies, while French Canadians were far less likely to accept the proposition that what was good for the British Empire was good for Canada.

For Sir John A. Macdonald and subsequent Prime Ministers, there had always existed the recognition that Canadian sovereignty depended to a great extent upon the strength of Great Britain, especially given the presence of the powerful and territorially ambitious American republic to the south. But international developments would lead to significant changes in British foreign policy, particularly with regard to the relationship with the United States.

The security of the Empire and Britain itself rested upon the naval supremacy of the Royal Navy. For that reason, the British had adopted a policy to maintain a fleet that was equal to the combined strength of the two largest foreign navies. However, in the last years of the nineteenth century, the policy was proving to be difficult, if not impossible, to continue. Germany had embarked upon an ambitious naval expansion program. Russia was enlarging its navy through domestic construction and the purchase of warships from foreign shipyards. The Japanese fleet, albeit with British aid, was becoming a formidable presence in the Far East, and the Americans were also in the process of increasing their naval capability.

By 1897, the potential existed for the formation of a continental alliance that could outnumber the Royal Navy in terms of capital ships. Since Britain maintained sizeable fleets based in Singapore and South Africa, the actual number of capital ships available for operations in European waters would be considerably less. Britain simply did not have the resources to redress this imbalance. The only practical alternative was to cultivate a strong working relationship with another naval power. The United States would prove to be the most logical choice.

The Americans began to entertain imperialist ambitions of their own, and by the 1890's had initiated an impressive naval building program. An integral part of American policy was the construction of the Panama Canal. Washington felt that a strong navy was essential in order to ensure American control of the canal, considered to be a vital link between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of America for economic and military reasons.

There was also a tradition of British-American naval accommodation in the Americas. The Monroe Doctrine had only been feasible with the tacit cooperation of the Royal Navy. The American policy of preventing European interference in the developing countries of Latin America had been enforced with British naval power. The ideas of Mahan, himself an American, had done much to foster pro-British sentiments in the American naval establishment, and the Royal Navy was deeply admired. It would serve as a blueprint for the development of the United States Navy.

For Canada, the efforts of the British government to cultivate American amity meant that Canadian national interests could be compromised. This would be especially true if Canadian and American interests became contentious. At the same time, Canada as a nation was struggling to chart its own nationalist course within the context of the British Empire. Neither Britain nor the United States would make the process any easier.

At the 1897 Imperial Conference in London, Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain advanced his proposals for an Imperial federation. It would include the establishment of an Imperial Council, which would include representation from Britain and the Dominion governments. Although such a federation would imply that Canada, Australia, New Zealand and others would have a greater voice in imperial policy, Laurier was convinced it would seriously limit Canada's powers of self-government. For Laurier, any commitments made by Canada to the Empire must be voluntary rather than imposed by an outside institution. In a speech to a British audience Laurier

## Window on War: The Battle of Colenso South Africa, 15 December 1899

General Sir Redvers Buller V.C. had arrived in Cape Town on 31 October. The hero of the Zulu Wars promptly divided his forces into three unequal groups and prepared to relieve the towns of Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking. The advancing British forces had fared poorly. The 3,000 man force commanded by General Sir William Gatacre was trounced on 10 December at Stormberg, and at Magersfontein 15 000 British troops received a severe mauling at the hands of the Boers.

The third army, 20 000 strong, was led by Buller himself. It marched toward Ladysmith. Initially, Buller had planned a circuitous route that would outflank the Boer forces, but had inexplicably changed his mind. His army did an about face and proceeded to head to Colenso, where shallow fords would allow Buller and his men to cross the fast flowing Tugela river. By 14 December, the army was encamped just south of the town of Colenso, and Buller issued orders for an attack the next day.

The Boer army may have been composed of farmers, but it was no motley force. The government in Pretoria had used the considerable wealth of the Transvaal to acquire the most modern weaponry available. The khaki-clad troops were equipped with the latest German Mauser rifle, a gun far superior to the British Lee-Enfields and Lee-Metfords. It was one of the first to use an ammunition clip, and had a much higher rate of fire than the British single shot bolt-action rifle. The Boers also had a considerable number of modern artillery pieces.

General Louis Botha commanded the Boer army, and Colenso would be his first battle. He had been one of the few members of the Transvaal parliament to vote against going to war, but once hostilities had commenced, he threw himself wholeheartedly into the military operation. Despite his inexperience, he had skillfully deployed his force across the river from Colenso. His riflemen had dug in along the north bank of the Tugela River, and barbed wire had been laid in the

shallow fords near the town. The wire was hidden just beneath the surface of the stream, and the British soldiers would not discover it until they tried to cross. The Boer artillery was deployed to the rear, prepared to shell the fords if and when the British army attempted to push their way across.

Buller and his officers gave the orders to attack at 6:30 A.M. General Hart launched the 4,000 strong Irish Brigade toward the main ford. The Afrikaners held their fire until the British troops had waded into the stream and discovered the impassable tangle of barbed wire in the ford. At that moment, Boer rifle fire and artillery shells rained down upon the immobile mass of men. The British were easy targets for the well-hidden Boer marksmen. Buller ordered another brigade to support Hart's men, but it only provided the Afrikaners with more targets. By the time the reinforcements had arrived in any appreciable numbers, all they could do was cover the retreat of the badly battered Irish Brigade.

In the meantime, Buller ordered his artillery to move forward and clear the banks of Boer troops. However, the artillery commander, Colonel Long, had misjudged the range, and his men came under intense rifle fire. The guns were abandoned, and efforts to retrieve them from their positions before the Boers counterattacked met with abject failure. Buller was forced to withdraw. His 20 000 men had suffered heavy casualties while Botha's 8 000 Afrikaners had incurred minimal losses.

The British army had been defeated in three battles in six days, and the British public was horrified. The Imperial government, which had already requested Dominion troops for the South African War, asked that even larger contingents be raised. In the press, Sir Redvers Buller was vilified as "Sir Reverse," and was soon to be replaced as commander of the British army in South Africa.

“Canada is a Nation. Canada is free, and freedom is nationality.”

When the Imperial Conference had concluded, Canada had not accepted any new Imperial obligations. Two years later, Laurier would have a more difficult time reconciling the demand in English Canada for Canadian involvement in the South African conflict with his nationalist goals.

### The Boer War: 1899-1902

The British had acquired South Africa as part of the territorial settlements negotiated at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The Dutch had been willing participants in Napoleon’s empire, and were obliged to cede their South African colonies to the British.

At the time, South Africa contained twenty-five thousand Afrikaners (Boers), descendants of the original Dutch settlers, thirty thousand African slaves and a further twenty thousand “free” Africans.

The Afrikaners resented British administration. Although South Africa had been a Dutch colony, there had been little contact with the Netherlands. Afrikaners had developed the area with little outside direction or help and were fiercely independent. In 1833, the British government abolished slavery in South Africa. Many Afrikaners, upset with the British interference in their established way of life, decided to leave the colony. Over ten thousand embarked upon a “Great Trek” northwards to establish new settlements, free from British colonial rule.

By 1860, there were four areas of European settlement in South Africa. The Cape Colony and Natal, composed of British and Boer colonists, were under British rule. The Orange Free State and Transvaal were independent Boer territories. The situation would have continued unchanged, but in 1870 diamonds were discovered in vast quantities near the Afrikaner town of Kimberley, and, within a short period of time, Kimberley mines were producing most of the world’s diamonds. The British government soon displayed an intense interest in the Boer territories, and, in 1877, British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli managed to engineer the annexation of the Transvaal. However, a combination of poor British administration and active Boer resistance to British rule led to open hostilities. With the Treaty of Pretoria in 1881, the British government reluctantly recognized the independence of The Orange Free State and the Transvaal.

In 1886, rich gold deposits were uncovered in the Transvaal. British interest in the Boer territories was rekindled. Soon, large numbers of prospectors flooded into the Transvaal, and the majority of them were British. Under the leadership of Transvaal president Paul Kruger, the Boer government imposed restrictions and taxation on the *Uitlanders* (Afrikaner for foreigner, literally “Outlander”). At the same time, Kruger utilized Transvaal’s new wealth to purchase armaments, primarily from the Netherlands and Germany. In the event that the British made another attempt to seize the Boer lands, a well-equipped Afrikaner force would confront them.

In 1895, there was an attempt to overthrow the Boer government in the Transvaal. The conspiracy involved the *Uitlanders* and officials from the Cape Colony. Dr. Jameson would

command a force of mounted police from the Cape Colony, who would move into the Transvaal to support the pro-British rebels. The Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, Cecil Rhodes, gave his full approval to the plan. For some reason, the insurrection was postponed, but Jameson was not informed. His mounted force invaded the Transvaal and was easily defeated by the Boers.

In Europe, the consensus was that British imperial greed was the reason for the “Jameson Raid,” and it was an unjustifiable act of aggression. The German Kaiser congratulated president Kruger for the Boer victory against the avaricious British.

Encouraged by European public opinion, and convinced that the British were determined to acquire the Transvaal and Orange Free State, Kruger continued to accumulate arms and munitions for the inevitable confrontation.

Efforts were made to negotiate a settlement, but the involvement of Cecil Rhodes in the insurrection plot, together with Boer suspicions that the British Foreign Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, had played a significant role in the conspiracy, eliminated any chance of reconciliation. President Kruger openly prepared for war, and ultimately decided to launch a pre-emptive attack before the British could organize an invasion of the Boer states. In October of 1899, Boer forces invaded the Cape Colony.

The Imperial government immediately began to raise an expeditionary force for the South African conflict. Canada, along with the other Dominions, received a request from the British authorities to contribute troops to the imperial force. This was not the first time that Britain had asked for Canadian military participation

in colonial conflicts. Sir John A. Macdonald had steadfastly refused to commit Canadian troops to British operations in the Sudan, stating that Canada was not prepared to help British Prime Minister Gladstone out of the “mess” that his imperial policies had created. Although Laurier, too, was reluctant to commit Canadian troops and resources to a war that would not benefit Canadian interests, he found it more difficult to resist the pressure in English Canada for Canadian involvement.

To further complicate his position, among French Canadians there was equally strong opposition to any Canadian participation in the South African conflict. In Parliament, Henri Bourassa led the French opposition to Canadian involvement. He and other prominent Quebec politicians felt that the British had created the problem, and the commitment of Canadian troops to fight a “British” war would set a dangerous precedent. Furthermore, Britain stood to gain much from a victory in South Africa, while Canada would gain nothing. However, there were some politicians that thought Canada would be wise to send a contingent in order to ensure British support in the ongoing dispute with the United States over the Alaska-Canada boundary.

Typically, Prime Minister Laurier fashioned a compromise solution that he hoped would be acceptable to both English and French Canadians. Canada would raise, equip and transport a force of one thousand volunteers to South Africa, where the British government would then assume full responsibility for them. For English Canadians it was too little, for French Canadians it was too much. Henri Bourassa resigned from the Laurier government in protest, and his subsequent election to Parliament as an independent indicated the strong support in Quebec for his position.

Later, an exasperated Laurier would summarize his predicament.

“I am branded in Quebec as a traitor to the French, and in Ontario as a traitor to the English. In Quebec I am branded as a Jingo, and in Ontario as a separatist. In Quebec, I am attacked as an Imperialist, and in Ontario as an anti-Imperialist. I am neither. I am a Canadian.”

The Canadian contingent destined for South Africa was composed of the Second Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Otter. However, after the British forces suffered initial defeats in South Africa, they requested additional troops, and a second contingent was soon raised.

The British had originally indicated that Canada need only send infantry battalions, but the nature of the war led the British to ask for both cavalry and artillery units to be included in a second contingent.

In some respects, the Afrikaner army shared many characteristics of the Métis forces that had faced the Canadian army in the Northwest Rebellion. The Boers were primarily a mounted force with great mobility and intimate knowledge of the area of operations. They were excellent marksmen and accomplished horsemen. They consistently outmanoeuvred their more cumbersome opponent, and fought from prepared positions. However, the Boers were well equipped with modern rifles and had ample supplies of *matériel*. Initially, they also enjoyed a significant superiority in artillery.

Ultimately, the Canadian Corps consisted of three battalions of the Royal Canadian Regiment, The Royal Canadian Dragoons,<sup>1</sup> The Canadian Mounted Rifles and the Royal Canadian Artillery Brigade. The Strathcona Horse regiment, privately raised and equipped in Alberta, provided additional cavalry. An extra battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment was raised, which relieved the British garrison at Halifax to make it available for service in the South African War. The total number of Canadian troops sent to South Africa was eight thousand three hundred and seventy-two.

The Canadian Corps was kept intact, which would set a precedent that would be followed in World War I. Together with British troops, it formed the Nineteenth Brigade, which was later described by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as “probably the very finest brigade in the whole army.”

The Canadian troops excelled in the war. They were well suited to the terrain and style of warfare in the conflict. Their performance at the battle of Paardenberg was instrumental in securing victory for the British army. However, Canadian skill in combat was not Canada’s only contribution to military operations.

After the initial British defeats, the British government had appointed a new Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshall Roberts. For his staff he selected General Kitchener and a brilliant Canadian engineer, Colonel Girouard. Girouard’s logistical planning was exemplary,

<sup>1</sup> Cavalry units equipped with rifles that were deployed as ground troops; essentially mounted infantry.

and Kitchener entrusted him with the formidable task of establishing and maintaining an intricate transportation network to ensure a steady supply of men and *matériel*. The work of Girouard displayed an imagination and thoroughness that was to be characteristic of Canadian senior officers in World War I.

By the end of 1900, the formal military campaign had been concluded. The Boer armies had been defeated, and President Kruger had fled to Europe. But the war was not over. Under the outstanding leadership of Christian de Wet, the Boers waged a guerilla war against the British. The Canadian troops proved to be even more valuable in this phase of the conflict, but Kitchener employed a rather brutal strategy to achieve total victory. Boer farms and towns were destroyed, and the civilian

population was herded into concentration camps. Imperial troops scoured the devastated countryside to eliminate any pockets of Boer resistance.

With the Peace of Vereeniging in 1902, the British offered generous terms to the Boers, but the Transvaal and Orange Free State lost their independence. The South African war enabled Britain to incorporate areas of vast mineral wealth into the Empire, but Canada derived no benefits from its contribution to the British victory. Increased political bitterness between English and French Canadians was the only significant consequence of Canadian involvement. For many Canadians, the Alaska Boundary dispute would indicate the extent of British gratitude for Canadian support in South Africa.



National Archives of Canada (C-006097, photo by R. Thiele).

**Paardeberg, 28 February 1900:**

Canadian wounded outside a field hospital the day after the battle of Paardeburg.

## The Alaska Boundary Dispute

The origins of the boundary dispute between Canada and the United States went back to 1825, when Alaska was a Russian possession and the Hudson's Bay Company was active in the Pacific Northwest. At that time, a demarcation line had been tentatively agreed to, but it contained few specific geographic details. Given the nature of British and Russian activity in the area, which was primarily fur trading with the native population, the lack of a definitive boundary presented no significant difficulties. Even after the United States had purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867, there was little concern voiced about the rather vague line of demarcation between British North America and Alaska.

In 1895, a dispute arose over the boundary between Venezuela and the British colony of Guiana. The Americans demanded that the British submit the issue to international arbitration, and the British acceded to American demands. The settlement of the Venezuela issue by arbitration could be regarded as a precedent for dealing with territorial issues in the Americas. In fact, it represented Britain's desire to strengthen a positive relationship with the United States and its willingness to sacrifice colonial interests to that end.

With the discovery of gold in the Yukon, the issue of the Alaska-Canada boundary suddenly became one of paramount importance to the Americans. There was no doubt that the Klondike was in Canadian territory, but the location of the boundary was very important in terms of access to the area. The Americans advanced a claim that would give them complete possession of the coastline and a mo-

nopoly on sea routes into the Klondike. The Canadian position did concede to an American presence along the coast, but the existence of deep inlets would give Canada access to the Yukon by sea.

However, the Americans insisted that the boundary should parallel the sinuous coastline, which would effectively deny Canada any coastal access whatsoever. The original survey of the area done in 1825 did nothing to address the issue. While it made reference to "a" mountain range as a benchmark for the demarcation line, it was ambiguous. The Canadian government claimed that it was the chain of mountains closest to the coast, which was interrupted by several harbours and inlets. The Americans were equally insistent that the 1825 survey referred to the mountain range farther inland.

Canada's case was weakened by the fact that Americans had settled in areas that Ottawa now claimed as Canadian territory, but at the time the Canadian government had not objected to the American presence. However, Laurier's administration was counting upon the British government to vigorously support the Canadian position.

The American attitude toward Canada during this period did little to help the situation. President Cleveland's administration regarded Canada as a British possession, not a self-governing nation, and stated that it was "unnatural and inexpedient" for a country in North America to belong to a European power. During the presidential campaign of 1896, the Republicans had openly called for the

annexation of Canada, and many Canadians resented this implied threat to their own national sovereignty. By the time that Theodore Roosevelt had become president, it was obvious that the Americans were in no mood for compromise. Roosevelt dispatched American troops to the Alaskan panhandle to show how determined he was to have American claims recognized.

The British government proposed that international arbitrators be used to settle the issue. Surely the Americans could not object when that was the method that they themselves had insisted upon in 1895 to settle the Venezuela border question. However, Roosevelt made it clear that under no circumstances would America allow an international body to settle the claims, which clearly indicates that the Americans were not prepared to negotiate. The Americans and British rejected each other's suggestions for some international representation on the arbitration committee, but an agreement was eventually reached. The six member committee would be composed of three American representatives, "impartial jurists of repute" selected by Roosevelt, two Canadian representatives and one British member appointed by the British Foreign Secretary.

Roosevelt's selections to the committee were dispatched to the negotiations with their positions already defined for them by the President. Senator Lodge, one of the "impartial jurists," received written instructions from Roosevelt:

*“But if there is a disagreement I wish it to be distinctly understood... that in my message to Congress I shall take a position... to give me authority to run the line (boundary) as we claim it,... without any further regard to the attitude of England and Canada.”*

Clearly, there was no intention of the part of the American government to compromise.

There was also an attitude of contempt for the Canadians. In private correspondence, Senator Lodge referred to them as “that collection of bumptious provincials,”<sup>2</sup> and made more than one reference to the “stupid Canadians” in his letters.

However, to counter the aggressive American stance the Canadian government believed that it could rely upon British support in the negotiations. As subsequent events would show, this faith in Britain was unjustified. In the Hay-Herbert Treaty that fixed the Alaska boundary, it was clear that the British representative, Lord Alverstone, had supported the majority of American claims. In Canada, there was the widespread feeling that Britain had sacrificed Canadian interests in order to maintain good relations with the United States.

On this occasion, Conservatives and Liberals, both English and French, shared the same sentiments. The conservative Robert Borden, who would become Prime Minister in 1911, felt that that Britain had not done its best to protect Canadian sovereignty. For Laurier, the agreement justified his contention that Imperial policies were not always in the best interests of Canada. Henri Bourassa, who had felt that the

<sup>2</sup> Bumptious: conceited. Provincials: unsophisticated or uncultured people.

Canadian case was weak to begin with, pointed out that Britain could not be relied upon to promote Canadian national goals, and that Canada must develop the ability and mechanisms to advance its own interests, independent of the British Empire.

## The Naval Question

The naval arms race in Europe had showed no signs of slowing during the first decade of the twentieth century, and the British were seriously concerned about their ability to maintain the traditional supremacy of the Royal Navy. The British Admiralty had proposed the creation of “Dominion Fleet Units,” which would allow the British to concentrate more naval strength in European waters. This was particularly true in the case of New Zealand and Australia, as their warships could assume some of the Imperial duties in the Pacific. The Admiralty had also approached Canada with the proposal, with the suggestion that the Canadian fleet would be based on the Pacific coast, while the Royal Navy would assume responsibility for the security of Canada’s Atlantic regions.

The British government had also suggested an alternative to the Laurier government; Canada could make a direct monetary contribution to the British shipbuilding program. Laurier felt that the creation of a Canadian navy was the better option, and would serve to advance Canadian national interests. The Alaska Boundary dispute had shown that Britain could pursue its own interests at the expense of Canada. In the event of war, Britain would likely allocate most of its navy to defend home waters, and the security of Canada’s Atlantic coast would likely suffer as a consequence.

Laurier decided upon a course of action that he hoped would be acceptable to both Canadians and the British government. He proposed the establishment of a small Canadian navy, which would be welcomed by the British Admiralty. But at the same time he made it clear that any involvement in Imperial operations would be a voluntary one, and that Canadian naval forces were not automatically at the disposal of the Royal Navy. The primary role of the Canadian Navy would be the maintenance of Canadian sovereignty. If Imperial operations were not in Canada’s interest, the Canadian government could choose not to commit its naval forces. The British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey realized that the creation of “Dominion Fleets” would have major implications for the role of Canada and the other Dominions in the formulation of Imperial policies:

*“... the creation of separate fleets has made it essential that the Foreign policy of the Empire should be a common policy. If it is to be a common policy, it is obviously one on which the Dominions must be taken into consultation, which they must know, which they must understand, and which they must approve.”*

Grey’s sentiments clearly reinforced Laurier’s nationalist goals, and would give Canada a greater ability to protect its own national interests within the Empire.

Laurier’s Naval bill proposed the formation of a Canadian Navy comprised of five light cruisers and six destroyers. A Naval college would be established to train Canadian naval officers. The Navy would be manned and directed by Canadians.

At first, there seemed to be unanimous support for Laurier's Naval Bill, but serious opposition soon emerged. English-speaking conservatives claimed that Laurier's proposed legislation would create a "tin pot navy,"<sup>3</sup> and that it would be better for Canada to make a direct financial contribution to the British navy's shipbuilding program. Obviously, they had quickly forgotten how Britain had failed to support Canada in the Alaska Boundary dispute, and that British naval priorities would not necessarily include the security of Canadian territorial waters.

In Quebec, Henri Bourassa was vehemently opposed to the creation of a Canadian navy. He claimed that the existence of a Canadian naval force created the potential for Canada to be pulled into any Imperial conflict, and that, ultimately, the Canadian Navy would be used primarily to advance British interests. Bourassa regarded Laurier's Naval Bill as a grave threat to Canadian nationalism:

*“It is the most complete backward step Canada has made in half a century... the gravest blow our autonomy had suffered since the origin of responsible government (1840).”*

For Bourassa, Canadian nationalism meant the right to disassociate itself completely from the British Empire's foreign policies. Laurier's nationalist views allowed for Canadian involvement in Imperial policies, but only in cases where Canadian interests were directly affected, and strictly on a voluntary basis. For many English-Canadian conservatives, Canada

<sup>3</sup> In modern colloquial terms "Mickey Mouse."

should demonstrate its loyalty to the Empire by supporting British policies and actions without question.

The Naval Bill became law, and, on paper at least, the Canadian Navy was an established fact. But the naval question was far from settled, and in the 1911 federal elections it continued to be a controversial issue. When the ballots had been counted, the Liberals had been defeated. Robert Borden had benefited from an unusual coalition of Quebec nationalists and English conservatives. Both had opposed the Naval Bill, but for very different reasons. French-Canadians criticized it because it would serve British interests, while English-Canadians regarded Laurier's bill as a threat to the unity of the Empire.

In 1912, Borden traveled to England to discuss naval concerns with the British authorities. He became convinced that the situation in Europe was so serious that Canada must take immediate action to bolster the strength of the Royal Navy. Although he was convinced that Canada must contribute to the military resources of the Empire, he had also argued that Canada must also have some control over its own foreign policies. The British dismissed Borden's position.

When Prime Minister Borden returned to Canada, he drafted the Naval Aid Bill, which would require Canada to contribute thirty-five million dollars to pay for the construction of three British dreadnoughts. He insisted that this was a temporary measure designed to deal with the "emergency" situation in Europe. His Quebec allies rejected the plan on the grounds that it would oblige Canada to make a substantial financial contribution to the Royal Navy while deriving no benefits whatsoever. However, the Bill was passed in

the House of Commons but rejected by the Liberal controlled Senate.

Meanwhile, the conservative government's implementation the Naval Bill was done with little energy or enthusiasm, despite Borden's earlier claims of the "emergency" that threatened the British Empire's naval forces. When World War I began, Canada was did not have a force capable of making a significant contribution to Imperial defence. ■

## Chapter Summary

As the twentieth century dawned, the forces of Canadian nationalism struggled for an identity in a changing international world. The British desire for Canadian involvement in the implementation of Imperial foreign policies made it difficult for Canada to chart an independent course of action. This situation was made even more complicated by the different interpretations of Canadian nationalism within Canada itself.

English-Canadians, many of them recent arrivals from Britain, had strong emotional ties to the motherland. In French Canada, there was a strong desire to see Canada free itself from the constraints placed upon Canada by Imperial considerations.

The changing relationship between Britain and the United States posed even greater obstacles. While the British would continue to expect full Canadian support in the pursuit of Imperial interests, they were far less inclined to reciprocate with full support for Canadian national interests. The Canadian participation in the South African War and the British position during the Alaska Boundary dispute were indicative of both these trends.

While Laurier's view of Canadian nationalism was a compelling one, the domestic and international climate presented considerable obstacles to his attempts to forge a distinct identity that all Canadians would share. In many ways, Laurier's nationalist dreams have remained unrealized, but the spirit of compromise that characterized his efforts has become an integral part of the Canadian identity.

## Recalling Facts

Match each name or item with the correct description.

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Paul Kruger        | A. He sent American troops to Alaska to reinforce American boundary claims         |
| 2. Joseph Chamberlain | B. The British Foreign Secretary who proposed the establishment of Dominion Fleets |
| 3. Theodore Roosevelt | C. Introduced the Naval Aid Bill to aid Britain's dreadnought construction program |
| 4. Lord Alverstone    | D. South African descendants of Dutch settlers                                     |
| 5. Wilfrid Laurier    | E. Resigned in protest over Laurier's Naval Bill.                                  |
| 6. Sir Edward Grey    | F. Canadian member of the senior British Staff during the Boer War                 |
| 7. Boers              | G. British Representative on the Alaska Boundary commission                        |
| 8. Henri Bourassa     | H. President of the Transvaal during the Jameson raid                              |
| 9. Robert Borden      | I. Insisted that any Canadian involvement in Imperial operations be voluntary.     |
| 10. Colonel Girouard  | J. British Foreign Secretary during the South African War                          |

## Chapter Review

- What developments led to a change in British policy toward the United States?
  - How did this change in British policy affect Canada?
- Why was the British government determined to acquire The Transvaal and Orange Free State?
  - What was the international reaction to the "Jameson Raid"?
- Outline the Canadian contributions in the Boer War.
  - What did Canada hope to gain from its support for the British in South Africa?
- What were the main objections to the Naval Bill raised by Bourassa?
  - What was the main reason for English-Canadian opposition the Bill?

## Critical Thinking

- Were the British actions in South Africa justifiable?
  - Should Canada have sent troops to support the British in South Africa?
- What difficulties did Laurier face in promoting Canadian nationalism?
- Comment on the attitude Americans displayed toward Canadians in 1900. Does it differ significantly from the American attitude today?