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**THE GOVERNORS GENERAL OF CANADA,
1888 - 1911:
BRITISH IMPERIALISTS AND CANADIAN "NATIONALISTS"**

by

Barbara Jane Messamore

B.A., University of Winnipeg, 1987

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in the Department of History**

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APPROVAL

NAME: BARBARA JANE MESSAMORE

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EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

CHAIR: Ian Dyck, Assistant Professor

Douglas Cole, Professor

Hugh Johnston, Professor

Edward Ingram, Professor

Robert Kubicek, Associate Dean,
Faculty of Arts
University of British Columbia
(Examiner)

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Barbara Jane Messamore

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of Canada's governor general in the years 1888 to 1911, a period which spans the careers of Lords Stanley, Aberdeen, Minto and Grey. The thesis draws upon the manuscript collections of each of the four men, as well as published memoirs and biographies of the governors general themselves and some of the key figures who surrounded them. Each of these men was afforded some sphere for interpreting his own approach to the office, yet they shared many of the same difficulties and challenges which were inherent in the office itself.

The period studied is of particular interest in that it witnessed the high water mark of imperial fervour. During this age of "new" imperialism, the governor general sought to promote commitment to empire. At the same time, he worked to foster Canadian patriotism and respect for the dominion's stature. With respect to military issues, political and diplomatic developments, and his social and cultural function, the governor general was forced to walk a tightrope between Canadian and imperial objectives. The potential for conflict was always present. The difficulties that the governor general experienced as the human link in the imperial chain symbolize the tensions and ambiguities of the entire imperial relationship. An understanding of this role, therefore, is an important key to Canadian and imperial history.

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INTRODUCTION

The role of the governor general in Canadian history has received scant attention. Perhaps this can be attributed to an historiographical tendency to focus on the ultimate achievement of political autonomy, and to see events and individuals as being merely swept along by an inevitable march toward independent statehood. Within this model, the governor general is little more than an embarrassing remnant of Canada's colonial status. To dwell on his function is to somehow deny our most cherished version of Canadian history. Instead, most attention to the governors general has been limited to isolated biographies of individual men in the viceregal role. Anthony Kirk-Greene, in a rare survey article on the subject, complains that "a lot of notable work has been done on the Governor-General but notably little on the Governors-General."¹

And yet, the governor general of Canada might be seen as a synecdoche of the entire imperial relationship. He is the figure upon whom all the ambiguities and tensions of the imperial connection converged. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada was neither a completely autonomous state nor a colonial dependency. Just as few could give a satisfactory definition of the country's "Dominion status," so it was difficult to define precisely the role of the governor general. Britain displayed renewed interest in her colonial possessions in the closing decades of the nineteenth century and sought to rekindle the sputtering flame of imperial sentiment. Yet the "new" imperialism of this period had to accommodate a nascent self-awareness in Canadian society. Rather than

1

Anthony Kirk-Greene, "The Governors-General of Canada, 1867 - 1952: A Collective Profile," Journal of Canadian Studies 12 (Summer 1977): 35.

attempting to subjugate the latter to the former, the British approach involved promoting both. As the on-the-spot representative of the imperial tie, the governor general was the chief agent of this influence. On most matters, he did not operate according to any preconceived agenda, but was merely alert to the opportunities his position afforded to enhance Canada's sense of nationhood and her commitment to the ideals of empire.

The role of the governor general is of particular interest during the era of the "new" imperialism. During this period Britain's more active interest in her imperial possessions made the viceregal role a more sensitive one than ever. This study shall focus on the years 1888 to 1911, so as to encompass the Canadian careers of Stanley, Aberdeen, Minto and Grey. In this way it will be able to break out of the prevailing mode of individual biographies, and focus on the role and not the man, yet still make allowances for the considerable leeway each viceregal appointee had for interpreting his function.

The governor general's role included specific powers and opportunities for influence. In the exercise of both, the men who held the office during this period approached their duties with a view to enhancing the British imperial tie and promoting a specific brand of Canadian "nationalism." This study will examine a variety of ways in which the governors general carried out this agenda. It will begin with background into the viceregal office itself, the type of men who held it between 1888 and 1911, and the prevailing currents of opinion in Canada about the country's national identity and the imperial tie. The second chapter will concentrate on specific instances in which the governors general involved themselves in concrete issues which seemed to provide an opening for them to pursue their dual agenda. This includes an examination of the viceregal role in military matters, in political and constitutional affairs, and in the area of diplomacy. The third chapter is devoted to the social and cultural objectives of the lords and ladies who

occupied Rideau Hall. The examination of their social role includes a look at attempts to influence the social tone of Canadian society, their charitable programmes and their travels to more remote areas of the Dominion to extend their mission. The cultural role of the governor general is perhaps the most enduring aspect of the office. This role afforded an opportunity to bolster a Canadian identity, to encourage a spirit of rapprochement between French and English Canadians and to promote commitment to empire. Each governor general was active in the sponsorship of art, music, literature, drama and sport.

In all these spheres, unqualified successes were very rare. The difficulties inherent in the viceregal role were as basic as the imperial relationship itself. The position required a tortured balancing act between conflicting interests and conditions. It was only possible to simultaneously promote British imperialism and Canadian nationalism if the latter were redefined to match the conditions of the former. The governors general of this period worked to construct numerous bridges between the two ideologies but invariably found themselves standing squarely in the middle of these rickety structures when the fissures began to appear.

CHAPTER 1

THE OFFICE:

The governor general's role in the pre-war years embodied many of the tensions inherent in Canada's dominion status. He was both an imperial emissary and a representative of Canadian interests. Indeed, it has been suggested that "much of Canada's constitutional history can be written in terms of changes in the powers of the Governor-General."¹ The role of the Canadian governor general before 1926 can be categorized into three main areas. The first of these is the constitutional function the governor general fulfilled with respect to the Canadian government. It was in this capacity that his function was thought to echo that of the British monarch vis a vis her own government. The second category might be described as areas of influence, as distinct from actual powers. These include the ceremonial functions in which the governor general was expected to foster patriotic sentiment or feelings of loyalty to the empire through patronage of sporting events, artistic endeavours, and the like. This category might also include the variety of occasions in which the governor general was able to act as a mediator between political factions. In his third major capacity the governor general was to function as an imperial representative. In reality, this third role was not separate and distinct, but simply coloured the governor general's approach to his other functions. He was expected to promote the interests of the empire, and to act as a quasi-diplomatic agent.² The overlapping of these functions, and

1

John C. Ricker and John T. Saywell, How are We Governed? (Toronto: Clarke & Irwin, 1961), 46.

2

Robert MacGregor Dawson, The Government of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 167.

the tension between them is suggestive of the ambiguous nature of Canada's "dominion status" within the larger empire, and the potential for conflict of Canadian national and British imperial goals.

The constitutional position of Canada's governor general before 1926 had its origin in Lord Durham's formula for responsible government. The British North America Act confirmed this and established that the governor general was to exercise the powers, authorities, and functions of the monarch. Leaving aside for a moment the practical impossibility of this analogy, there is the more immediate question of what these powers, authorities and functions actually are.

The chief difficulty arises out of the imprecision of the monarch's role. The British sovereign's powers are derived from statute, or acts of Parliament, and common law, or "prerogative." These powers have been limited over history by contractual agreement (Magna Carta is a famous example), through statutes, or through simple disuse.³ Custom dictates, for example, that the monarch should not attend cabinet meetings and should be above party politics. The traditional prerogative of refusal of assent is also effectively dead, since it has not been exercised since Queen Anne's reign, and its invocation would undoubtedly spark a crisis for the monarchy.⁴ Gwen Neuendorff muses, "we admit that we do not know just what the King stands for in the constitution. Yet the Governor-General of a Dominion is glibly said to resemble him in all essential respects."⁵

The governor general is Canada's head of state, by virtue of

3

Ibid., 157.

⁴ Gwen Neuendorff, The Evolution of Dominion Status: The Governor-Generalship of Canada and the Development of Canadian Nationalism (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1942), 6-9.

⁵ Ibid., 19.

the queen's delegation of that power. He acts on the advice of the privy council, whose members he appoints and removes. The British North America Act makes no mention of the prime minister, or a cabinet as such. But of course in Canada, as in Britain, the real executive power resides with the cabinet. The cabinet meets in secret and collectively takes responsibility for all decisions. The cabinet must, however, have the support of the House of Commons to act, which is the basis of responsible government. The governor general's appointment of these ministers is a mere formality, and must be according to the advice of the prime minister. The power to appoint a prime minister is also curtailed by the necessity of having parliamentary support for the leader. The governor general, on advice, summons, prorogues, and dissolves Parliament. He also gives the speech from the throne at the opening of each parliamentary session, acting as Goldwin Smith wryly observed as a "ventriloquial apparatus" for the prime minister.⁶ The governor general gives royal assent to bills that have passed the House of Commons and Senate. While assent is now automatic, the option of reserving a bill for review in London, or disallowing it altogether still existed in the period in question, although such action was potentially controversial.

These reserve powers have been regarded with mixed emotions. Robert MacGregor Dawson chose to emphasize the positive aspects of these powers:

Like the gold piece under the mattress, it serves not by continued use but through its potential power to cope with emergencies; the successful household is the one which never has occasion to resort to it, yet which derives a feeling of additional security and well-being by its mere presence and the knowledge that it can be used when disaster threatens.⁷

Goldwin Smith preferred another metaphor. To him, the governor

⁶ Goldwin Smith, as quoted in Neuendorff, 8.

⁷

Dawson, Government, 176.

general was "useless, but as capable of giving harm as the appendix."⁸ According to Neuendorff, this attitude was prevalent. She suggests that the Canadian press shared the conviction that "the Governor-General was superfluous when he agreed with, and mischievous when he dissented from his Cabinet."⁹

The Letters Patent issued in 1878 together with the Royal Instructions established a permanent basis for the office of the governor general.¹⁰ Owing in large measure to the influence of Canadian Justice Minister Edward Blake, these new documents did not contain a list of bills which must be reserved, but it was long afterward understood that legislation must be scrutinized with a view to safeguarding imperial interests.¹¹

The governor general's salary was set at ten thousand pounds by the terms of the British North America Act, and while grants were grudgingly made on occasion to defray the cost of travel and entertainments, the inadequacy of the compensation was a complaint shared by virtually all who occupied the post.¹² As colonial secretary, Lord Knutsford expressed his belief that the governor general should be willing to spend plenty of his own money over and above the allotted salary.¹³ Apparently a sense

8

Goldwin Smith, as quoted in Sandra Gwyn, The Private Capital: Ambition and Love in the Age of Macdonald and Laurier (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1984), 283.

⁹ Neuendorff, 201.

¹⁰ Previously, new Instructions and Letters Patent were issued with each appointment.

¹¹ Mary Elizabeth Hallett, "The Fourth Earl Grey as Governor General of Canada, 1904-11" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1970), 44.

¹² Kirk-Greene, "Governors-General," 40.

¹³ Brian Layton Blakeley, The Colonial Office, 1868 - 1892 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1972), 123.

of noblesse oblige was expected of incumbents. An observer writing in the Philadelphia Quiz seemed to sympathize:

It is no easy task to be a Governor General of Canada. You must have the patience of a saint, the smile of a cherub, the generosity of an Indian prince and the back of a camel.¹⁴

These virtues were especially in demand in the less defined, "grey" areas in which the governor general was called upon to use his influence, rather than his actual powers. In an article celebrating fifty years of confederation, W. L. Edmonds suggested that it was the duty of the governor general "to lead where he can without in any circumstances attempting to rule."¹⁵ The governor general was expected to exercise a sort of moral leadership among party politicians and offer understanding and encouragement to his ministers. Since the prime minister "occupies a lonely eminence at the top of the political hierarchy," J. R. Mallory explains,

he may upon occasion find it a solace and an aid to unburden himself to a listener who is both above political interest and a proper recipient of the most intimate secrets of the government.¹⁶

This informal leadership could take the form of reconciling political antagonists, smoothing over federal-provincial quarrels, or affording an appearance of continuity in a sea of political turbulence. Never modest about his own function, Dufferin described the governor general as

A representative of all that is august, stable, and sedate in the country; incapable of partisanship, and lifted far above

¹⁴

The Philadelphia Quiz, as quoted in Hallett, 37.

¹⁵

W. Lewis Edmonds, "The Governors-General since Confederation," The Canadian Magazine 49 (July 1917): 255.

¹⁶

J. R. Mallory, The Structure of Canadian Government (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), 56.

the atmosphere of faction, without adherents to reward or opponents to oust from office.¹⁷

The scope for moral leadership was not limited to politicians. The governor general was expected to use his influence to elevate the general tone of Canadian life. By associating himself with noble causes and achievements in the arts and sports, the governor general worked to promote the best aspects of Canadian society. Aberdeen expressed his commitment to foster

any influence that will sweeten and elevate public life; to observe, study, and join in making known the resources and development of the country ... to promote ... every movement and every institution calculated to forward the social, moral and religious welfare of all the inhabitants of the Dominion.¹⁸

Part of this influence was meant to strengthen and preserve ties to Britain. Much of this was done on the governor general's own initiative, but the formal, ceremonial occasions, such as the opening of Parliament, speech from the throne, etc. were continual reminders to Canadians of the presence of the monarchy. John Ricker and John Saywell assert that

one cannot measure the value of such formal occasions. They are a reminder that what is did not always exist. They bring to an old lumber town on the Ottawa River the majesty and drama of a thousand years of struggle for free institutions.¹⁹

But as much as the governor general may serve as a reminder of the British monarchy, the equation of the governor general with

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Dufferin, as quoted in R. H. Hubbard, Rideau Hall, an Illustrated History of Government House, from Victorian Times to the Present Day (Montreal: McGill - Queen's University Press, 1977), 35.

18

Aberdeen, as quoted in J. Castell Hopkins, "Lord and Lady Aberdeen," The Canadian Magazine 2 (December 1893): 171.

19

Ricker and Saywell, 59.

the monarchy is essentially false. One of the primary constitutional purposes for a monarch is the appearance of stability and continuity afforded by a permanent, hereditary head of state. The queen presumably has experience superior to that of her limited-term ministers. She does not use this experience to pressure government, but only reserves the right, in Bagehot's phrase, "to be consulted ... to encourage ... to warn."²⁰ The governor general falls short of this ideal in a very basic way. As he serves a term of only six years, his value as a symbol of continuity is questionable. The queen represents "England" to her subjects, but the governor general during the period in question was not even a Canadian citizen, despite fervent professions of Canadian patriotism. The fierce personal loyalty inspired by the monarch could never be the governor general's due. But there is a more fundamental reason still why the analogy does not work.

Prior to 1926, the governor general was in the extraordinary predicament of accepting advice from two sets of ministers. This was the difficulty which had led Lord John Russell to reject the idea of responsible government in 1839 as inconsistent with colonial status.²¹ The formula was fine as long as the Canadian and British ministers concurred, and as long as the distinction between internal and external matters was clear. But dominion and imperial interests could occasionally conflict, and it was then that the governor general became, in W. M. Whitelaw's words, "a shock absorber between colonial autonomy and imperial control."²² Metaphors for this

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Walter Bagehot, as quoted in John T. Saywell, The Office of Lieutenant-Governor: A Study in Canadian Government and Politics (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), 34.

²¹ Arthur Berriedale Keith, Responsible Government in the Dominions (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), 15.

²² W. M. Whitelaw, as quoted in Neuendorff, 1.

awkward position are abundant, and it is not surprising that some of the most striking come from the governors general themselves. The Earl of Dufferin described his position as analogous to "a man riding two horses in a circus."²³ Earl Grey spoke of walking a tightrope.²⁴ John Buchan, later Lord Tweedsmuir and a governor general himself, observed in a biography of the Earl of Minto that, in contrast to the easy work of a dictator, the governor general "walks inevitably on a razor edge."²⁵

This third duty, the obligation to ensure that imperial interests were not compromised, was balanced by the task of keeping the British cabinet informed of Canadian objectives and conditions. There were numerous occasions when the governor general was suspected of sacrificing Canadian interests on the altar of British imperialism or to achieve other diplomatic goals. While isolated examples of such failure to protect Canadian interests exist,²⁶ in general the imperial government tried to satisfy Canadian opinion. This was especially important at a time when England was anxious to secure Canadian co-operation in imperial objectives. On a number of occasions the governor general acted in defense of Canadian interests when the Colonial Office attempted to pursue unpopular policies. Carman Miller has identified a prevalent historiographical bias:

No misconception has possessed a hardier constitution than the imperial conspiracy theory, the notion that there existed a concerted turn-of-the-century plan to rob Canada of its political autonomy. Central to this theory is a basic

²³ Dufferin, as quoted in Neuendorff, 71.

²⁴ Grey, as quoted in Dawson, Government, 168.

²⁵ John Buchan, Lord Minto: A Memoir (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1924), 121.

²⁶ Donald Creighton has detailed Lisgar's role in the unsatisfactory conclusion of the 1871 Washington Treaty. See Donald Creighton, John A. Macdonald: vol. 2 The Old Chieftain (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955), 79-102.

confusion of Rideau Hall with Downing Street. ... Rideau Hall and Downing Street did not work in tandem.²⁷

But while the governor general was not sent to Canada as a Colonial Office "mole," he did owe his appointment to the British government. And the British government held the key to future opportunities.

THE MEN:

The reasons for a given individual's appointment to the governor generalship were varied, yet each of the appointees shared something in common. "They have been drawn," Leslie Roberts writes, "from the demi-gods of Britain's governing class ... that class ... which is born to rule and to administer as other men are born to the loom and the shuttle."²⁸ Of all the criteria for selection, family background was paramount. Yet privilege carried responsibility. Each of these men were conscious from an early age that their family name was a sort of imperative -- a call to duty. Stanley was the younger son of the 14th Earl of Derby who was three times prime minister. Both Aberdeen and Grey were grandsons of prime ministers. Edmund Burke likened the great families of England to "great oaks that shade a country and perpetuate [their] benefits from generation to generation" as opposed to annual plants which perish in a season.²⁹ Disraeli observed that members of the nobility were "known, and seen and marked" and were thus unable to evade their

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Carman Miller, The Canadian Career of the Fourth Earl of Minto: The Education of a Viceroy (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), 195.

²⁸

Leslie Roberts, These Be Your Gods (Toronto: Musson, 1929), 31-7.

²⁹ Edmund Burke, as quoted in W. L. Guttsman, The British Political Elite (New York: Basic Books, 1964), 67.

social responsibilities.³⁰

This mingled sense of privilege and service was instilled in young aristocrats at an early age by the British public school system. Anthony Kirk-Greene finds that "the educational pattern of the Governors-General of Canada is virtually a paradigm of the British aristocracy." Of the sixteen who held the office after Monck, ten went to Eton and three to Harrow.³¹ Oxford, Cambridge and the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich were the favoured sources of higher education.³² The values fostered by such institutions were thought to be those required by those men destined to rule. The fag system taught both dominance and submission; the goal was to produce implicit obedience to authority coupled with the ability to lead armies or governments.³³ Equally important was the emphasis on team sports, which stressed collective, rather than individual, achievement. The bonds of friendship and shared experience which were formed in public school and kept alive through club membership -- all part of the "old boy" network -- could have a determinative effect on one's career.

These influences produced a type of man that many felt could not be paralleled in Canada. Yet others felt that turning to England for leadership betokened Canada's insecurity and would lead to a hardening of nascent class distinctions. Writing in 1907, W. D. Lighthall complained that the governors general

embody a system of publicly recognised privileges and grades of social precedence; implying the importation also of a system of social inferiority, which is contrary to our

³⁰ Benjamin Disraeli, as quoted in Guttsman, British Political Elite, 63.

³¹ Kirk-Greene, "Governors-General," 46.

³² Ibid., 46.

³³ Guttsman, British Political Elite, 152-3.

institutions and bad for our people. ³⁴

This provoked an impassioned response from C. F. Deacon, who argued that

The English public schools develop a high type of character which bears glorious fruit in the public service, and it is doubtful if by any electoral methods known to man such good material could be secured as by the English system of appointing her pro-consuls. Surely we do not want the trail of our ballot-box scandals besmirching the purity of our highest office. ³⁵

Notwithstanding winds of change, the ideal of disinterested public service was still very much alive -- especially where the empire was concerned.

Of course, factors other than an abstract sense of duty had a bearing on who accepted, or was offered, the governor generalship. The post has been regarded as a reward for political support or a way of disposing of an importunate friend. ³⁶ J.S. Mill once called the British empire "a vast system of outdoor relief for the British upper classes." ³⁷ But the Canadian governor generalship has also been considered a punishment for political dissent. A case in point is Lansdowne's 1883 appointment which occurred shortly after his break with Gladstone over Home Rule. Punch marked the occasion with a cartoon of Lansdowne on skis amid the snow "in his new Canadian costume, adapted to remaining for some time out in the

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W. D. Lighthall, "The Governor-Generalship," The Canadian Magazine 28 (February, 1907): 373.

³⁵

C. F. Deacon, "The Governor-Generalship," The Canadian Magazine 28 (March 1907): 499.

³⁶

Keith, Responsible Government, 67.

³⁷ J. S. Mill, as quoted in James Morris, Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire (Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books, 1968), 118.

cold."³⁸ Grey found that others shared this impression. He wrote of his premature Canadian farewell ceremonies of May, 1910:

Everyone has been wonderfully kind. Sir Wilfrid told me after the Farewell Ceremony was over that I had taught him to change his opinion, that the Governor Generalship of Canada was regarded as a term of Exile!³⁹

To his credit, Grey never displayed anything but enthusiasm for his Canadian mission. Nevertheless, he was initially reluctant to accept the post and agreed only after his wife's aunt, Lady Wantage, offered to supplement the salary.⁴⁰ When "an awful rumour" reached Grey in Canada in May of 1910 that his term might be extended, his desperate pleas to the Colonial Office suggest that his claim that he "loved every minute"⁴¹ of his Canadian sojourn might have been an exaggeration:

I must beg you to protect me as far as you possibly can against a demand being made upon me, which if made, it would be my duty to accept, although all my personal interests cry out against it.⁴²

Nevertheless, Grey bowed to the inevitable and accepted an extension of his term. The Duke of Connaught was not yet ready to assume office and an interregnum was unthinkable: it might "teach the Canadian people that it was possible to do without a

³⁸ Punch, as quoted in Kirk-Greene, "Governors-General," 38.

³⁹

Grey to Crewe, 5 May 1910, Grey of Howick Papers, National Archives of Canada.

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Hallett, 26.

⁴¹ Harold Begbie, Albert, Fourth Earl Grey: A Last Word (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1917), 126.

⁴²

Grey to Crewe, 22 May 1910, Grey Papers.

Governor General," Grey feared.⁴³ Aberdeen's appointment to the post in 1893 was regarded as a consolation prize for his failure to secure a new term of office as lord lieutenant of Ireland.⁴⁴ Even so, Lady Aberdeen was not enthusiastic. "The only safety was not to think, and to be like flint," she wrote stoically.⁴⁵ Minto appears to have been an exception in that he campaigned actively for the post, enlisting the aid of important contacts he had made in his military career. Both Wolseley and Lansdowne reportedly intervened on his behalf.⁴⁶

The re-invigoration of the Colonial Office late in the nineteenth century might be expected to have had an impact on the process of selecting a colonial governor. In 1877 competitive exams for Colonial Office candidates were introduced, and there was a move toward "modernization" and greater efficiency. Joseph Chamberlain is widely credited with breathing new life into the office, although changes were clearly in the works before 1895. The establishment of a separate Dominions Department in 1907 was part of the trend toward rationalization.⁴⁷ The older, established possessions apparently were not alarmed at this new development, but rather gratified by it. Contrary to some later historical assessments, C. P. Lucas of the Colonial Office was convinced that the greatest fear in the dominions was not of excessive interference, but of being ignored altogether.⁴⁸ In earlier

⁴³

Grey, as quoted in Hallett, 303.

⁴⁴ Marjorie Pentland, A Bonnie Fechter: The Life of Ishbel Marjoriebanks Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair (London: B.T. Batsford, 1952), 101.

⁴⁵ Lady Aberdeen, as quoted in Pentland, 105.

⁴⁶ Miller, 47.

⁴⁷ Blakeley, vii-x.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 88.

decades, British indifference to the colonies was legendary. Colonial office clerks might work at a relaxed pace from noon until 5:30, with a nap after lunch allowed, and two months' vacation.⁴⁹ Nor were those at the top infected with any greater zeal. Palmerston's response to the lack of interest in the Colonial portfolio has often been quoted: "Well, I'll take the office myself... Just come upstairs and show me on the map where these damned places are."⁵⁰

But while considerable progress may have been made in the reform of the Colonial Office bureaucracy, the criteria for political appointments remained quite constant. There was a deeply entrenched tradition of patronage in the selection of imperial administrators that could not easily be overcome. Even a man as vigorous and resolute as Chamberlain was hampered by the weight of such traditions.⁵¹ For example, the assertion that Chamberlain "handpicked" Minto to send to Canada as "the ideal apostle of Imperialism"⁵² does not stand up to scrutiny. Carman Miller points out that Minto was not especially favoured as a candidate. He did not share Chamberlain's brand of imperial enthusiasm and was especially critical of the Colonial Secretary's friendship with "that d--- blackguard" Cecil Rhodes.⁵³ It seems that such a wide variety of factors had to be considered in making a selection for the post of governor general that the candidate's compatibility with any wider agenda could not carry much weight. Financial independence, religion,

⁴⁹ Neuendorff, 47.

⁵⁰ Palmerston, as quoted in Donald Creighton, "The Victorians and the Empire," Canadian Historical Review 19 (June 1938): 143.

⁵¹ Robert V. Kubicek, The Administration of Imperialism: Joseph Chamberlain at the Colonial Office (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1969), ix-x.

⁵² Neuendorff, 49.

⁵³ Miller, 49.

marital status, and the absence of any disagreeably partisan associations were more important. Brian Blakeley observes that "[the] criteria for appointment did not preclude ability, but the system assuredly was not designed to select the best man for each particular position."⁵⁴ While they were all of a "type," the interests and inclinations of an individual governor general could influence the character of his term.

IMPERIALISM AND NATIONALISM IN CANADA:

In the final decades of the nineteenth century the ideals of British imperialism and Canadian nationalism were loudly and self-consciously trumpeted, often by the same individuals. Since these two ideals appear to be mutually exclusive, it might be useful to establish first how these terms have been used and what they really mean.

The "new" imperialism of the late nineteenth century was in large measure defensive and reactionary. Colonial expansion and consolidation, which had fallen into disfavour during the middle decades of the century, now took on a greater urgency. The unification of Italy and Germany after 1870, which seemed to augur a realignment of power in Europe, made "Little Englandism" seem like a dangerous course. The imperial ambitions of other European powers startled Britain out of her complacency. And yet colonial possessions which had long enjoyed self-government could not simply be recalled into the fold. It was necessary for Britain to approach the dominions in a spirit of partnership, and discuss various schemes by which colonies might take on greater responsibility in imperial affairs. After an extended period of indifference and neglect, the colonies, in the words of Donald Creighton, "were haled forth, blinking, into the sunshine of Britannic favour; they were invited to sit in Colonial congresses and to participate in the colour and

⁵⁴ Blakeley, 120.

splendour of the jubilees." ⁵⁵ Needless to say, a different, and perhaps cruder, approach was deemed appropriate for the less developed colonial possessions. Britain's relationship to each of her colonies was varied, a reflection each's history and unique conditions. The myriad variety of imperial connections makes any categorical definition of the new imperialism difficult.

Just as there were various types of relationships between Britain and her colonies, so were there various motives at work in developing or sustaining those relationships. Military and diplomatic strength in a changing world was only one aspect of the new imperialism. As always, religious zeal and economic opportunism played a role. In addition, there was that distinctly Victorian sense of mission -- the wish to spread the benefits of an enlightened society to "lesser breeds." This imperial motive was the one which most often inspired the muse of Victorian poets and orators. Rosebery declared the British empire "the greatest secular agency for good that the world has seen." ⁵⁶ Frequently, there were racist overtones to this strand of imperialism. Chamberlain asserted, "I believe that the British race is the greatest of governing races that the world has ever seen." ⁵⁷ Rudyard Kipling is the best known champion and apologist for this impulse. Some cynics saw this lauded sense of imperial mission as a transparent justification for seamy economic motives, especially when employed by characters such as Cecil Rhodes. Rhodes crowed:

We happen to be the best people in the world, with the highest ideals of decency and justice and liberty and peace, and the

⁵⁵ Creighton, "Victorians," 151.

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Rosebery, as quoted in Richard Faber, The Vision and the Need: Late Victorian Imperialist Aims (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), 64.

⁵⁷ Joseph Chamberlain, as quoted in Faber, 64.

more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for humanity.⁵⁸

With respect to Canada, where crude conquest and blatant commercial exploitation were not the objectives, the imperial vision was couched in terms that would appeal to the country's pride in a larger Britannic identity. Lacking much history of her own, with few native heroes, Canada was encouraged to identify with the greatness of Shakespeare, the triumph of Nelson at Trafalgar.⁵⁹ Some Canadians became more British than the British. Sir Ivor Jennings finds that those of British extraction overseas were often the most ardent in clinging to the trappings of patriotism. "Big Ben," he writes, "'thrills' in the outposts of Empire far more than in the city of Westminster."⁶⁰ Of course, it was not only misty-eyed sentiment that encouraged the British tie. Britain was an appealing trade partner and the largest investor in Canadian enterprise. George Wrong explains:

John Bull is a wealthy old gentleman with plenty of money to invest. Canada is a vigorous young man, in business for himself, but cramped by lack of capital. What more natural than that one should supply the other?⁶¹

An association with the might of the British empire also gave Canada much more clout on the world scene. In 1911 James Cappon wondered how an independent Canada might fare in negotiations

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Cecil Rhodes, as quoted in Faber, 64.

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Douglas Cole, "The Problem of 'Nationalism' and 'Imperialism' in British Settlement Colonies," Journal of British Studies 10 (May 1971): 172.

⁶⁰ Sir Ivor Jennings, The British Commonwealth of Nations (London: Hutchinson, 1961), 181.

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George Wrong, "Canadian Nationalism and the Imperial Tie," Proceedings of the American Political Science Association (1909): 106.

with the United States over such issues as boundaries, fishing rights, and water power. "Our representatives when they went to Washington... would have to adopt a very different tone from that which they do at present," he acknowledged.⁶²

While sentimental, economic and diplomatic factors may have pulled Canada toward Britain, there were other considerations which pushed her. Not least of these was antipathy toward the United States. Outright annexation was feared, but so too was moral contamination. American democratic republicanism was often perceived as unstable and chaotic, fostering social discontent, crime and violence. British society, by contrast, was not dominated by material motives -- monarchical, aristocratic, ecclesiastical and democratic forces all contended for a place, and a wholesome balance resulted.⁶³ Further, uneasiness over American "Manifest Destiny" dictated that a protective alliance was a necessary defense. In 1904 Wilfred Campbell practically summed up Canada's options. The choice, he explained, was between "Imperialism or Imperialism."⁶⁴

While Canada's tie to Britain was characterized as "imperial," the prevailing usage of the term did not necessarily carry the freight of expansionism and subjugation of a weaker state. "Imperialism" with respect to Canada was a kind of hazy, ill-defined bond which was very much in the eye of the beholder. James Morris explains:

The real relationship between London and Ottawa could not easily be defined. One could not look it up in a reference book. It was a modus vivendi, based upon ambivalences,

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James Cappon, "Canada's Relation to the Empire," Queen's Quarterly 19 (Oct-Dec 1911): 94.

⁶³ Carl Berger, The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867 - 1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 157.

⁶⁴ Wilfred Campbell, as quoted in Carl Berger, Sense of Power, 170.

sympathies and the realities of power, and very difficult for foreigners to master. The imperial links were maintained in twilight, sometimes relaxed, sometimes stiffened, so subtle that few people really knew just how independent Canada was, and while Englishmen generally supposed it to be virtually a sovereign State, Americans and continentals generally regarded it simply as a colonial outpost, behaving as Britain told it to.⁶⁵

The imprecision of the imperial relationship between Canada and Britain enabled many strange bedfellows to make it a common cause. Inevitably, attempts to formalize this modus vivendi foundered. The Imperial Federation League, which formed in 1884, was instrumental in the summoning of the first Colonial (later "Imperial") Conference in 1887. But the League found that it was unable to arrive at any satisfactory constitutional scheme. Canadians recognized that sheer force of numbers would mean that their influence in any formal imperial body was likely to be diminished, rather than enhanced.⁶⁶ The League broke up in 1893 over conflicting objectives. It is revealing that those who sought to define Canada's relation to Britain during the last decades of the nineteenth century usually had to resort to analogy and metaphor. Kipling used the device of a mother and grown daughter in his 1897 tribute, "Our Lady of the Snows", written to commemorate Canada's announcement of a preference to British goods:

A nation spoke to a nation,
A Queen sent word to a throne;
"Daughter am I in my mother's house,
But mistress in my own...."⁶⁷

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Morris, 386.

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Norman Penlington, Canada and Imperialism, 1896-1899 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 8.

⁶⁷ Rudyard Kipling, as quoted in John A. Cooper, "Self-Government and Imperialism," Queen's Quarterly 11 (January 1904): 245.

As a grown daughter in the imperial family, Canada was encouraged to take on responsibility commensurate with her adult status. Participation in the affairs of empire was not perceived to be compromising to Canada's dignity; it was a demonstration of it.

To many, Canada's status as a member of the empire was the sine qua non of her sense of national identity. These avowed Canadian "nationalists" believed that Canadian nationality was inextricably bound up with Canada's British roots. "We are Canadian, and in order to be Canadian we must be British," Principal G. M. Grant insisted in 1898.⁶⁸ No contradiction was perceived between "imperialism" -- that is, membership in the British empire -- and Canadian nationalism. Minto might have spoken for many of his contemporaries when he said, "I do not see that the encouragement of Canadian nationality need militate against Imperial interests, unless the Canadian sentiment is foolishly exaggerated."⁶⁹ But fundamentally, this synthesis rests on a rather limited definition of nationalism.

A distinction must be drawn between loyalty to a nation and loyalty to a state. A "nation" does not necessarily exist within the tidy parameters of the political and geographic state. Instead, it is an ethnic conception. Douglas Cole offers the following definition:

Nationalism is the consciousness of being an ethnically differentiated people and expresses itself as loyalty to an ethnic nation. It expresses itself in cultural and philosophic terms, calling upon metaphysics and anthropology, and defining itself in terms of language, "blood" or tradition. It is based upon a self-conception, self-awareness, and self-assertion of an ethnically circumscribed group of

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Principal Grant, as quoted in Penlington, 66.

⁶⁹ Minto, as quoted in Frank H. Underhill, "Lord Minto on His Governor Generalship," Canadian Historical Review 40 (June 1959): 128.

people.⁷⁰

Thus, while nationalism certainly exists in Canada, it does not coincide with the country's political and geographic borders. Canada's history clearly demonstrates that nationalism is alive and well in Quebec, and in certain sectors of English-speaking Canada, but it is not one and the same nationalism. Ramsay Cook has shrewdly noted that Canada's problem is not too little nationalism, but too much.⁷¹ Unfortunately, Canadian historians have tended to misuse the term "nationalism" to denote the progress toward increased political autonomy and self-government. Agitation for political self-determination may be the result of nationalism, but it is not identical with it.

When figures such as Minto declared themselves to be both British imperialists and Canadian nationalists they meant to advocate patriotism to the political entity of Canada within the context of the larger empire. There were, of course, some brave souls who felt that it was possible to reconcile the various elements of Canadian society into a true nationalism. Robert Grant Haliburton, a leading light of the Canada First movement, believed that Canada's vigorous northern climate was the source of her national identity. Only the strongest racial stock could thrive in such a bracing environment. Just as Britain's population was a mingling of many northern elements, so Canada was comprised of a combination of these hardy breeds. The Norman French were part of the same superior stock.⁷² But despite such attempts at synthesis, most English Canadian

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Cole, "The Problem of 'Nationalism' and 'Imperialism'," 164-5.

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Ramsay Cook, as quoted in Cole, "The Problem of 'Nationalism' and 'Imperialism'," 180.

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Carl Berger, "The True North Strong and Free," in Interpreting Canada's Past vol. 2 After Confederation, ed. J. M. Bumsted (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), 160.

nationalists saw Canada as uncompromisingly British. Charles Mair insisted that the "minor nationalities" must sacrifice their individuality for the sake of a homogeneous nation.⁷³ It was easy to reconcile British imperialism with a nationalism that was essentially British nationalism. Thus, "nationalism" in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Canada may have meant something that might be better expressed as patriotism -- that is, loyalty to the political state -- or, a widely-based Britannic nationalism that was not exclusive to Canada. And while occasionally there were difficulties reconciling the former with British imperialism, the latter was clearly complementary.

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Charles Mair, as quoted in Berger, The Sense of Power, 59.

CHAPTER 2

As the resident imperial representative, the governor general was the figure upon whom all the tensions of the imperial relationship converged. During this period when the bonds of empire were being re-defined, and a number of conflicting agenda were at work, the viceregal post was a veritable minefield. His powers were hazy and even the amount of influence he could afford to exert was an open question. Yet pressure from Britain to attempt to sway Canadian policy could at times be considerable. This was certainly true of military matters. Canada's indifference to defence considerations was a constant irritation to Britain and the governor general was often called upon to try to awaken the country's military spirit. The governor general had to encourage Canadians to accept British direction in matters of defence while instilling in them the notion that this would enhance Canada's dignity as a nation. Political, constitutional and diplomatic matters could also be a trap for an unwary governor general. The measured success or failure of an incumbent's term often depended on accidents of circumstance. If a controversial issue which seemed to require some sort of action should arise, all of the difficulties and ambiguities of the viceregal role would come into sharp focus. Then too, some of the governors general were temperamentally inclined to take an active role, or were especially subject to pressure from the home government. With respect to concrete issues of defence, politics and diplomacy, the governor general could indeed be forced into the role of a "shock absorber" between the interests of the empire and the dominion.

MILITARY ISSUES:

The ambiguity of Canada's status as a nation, and as a part of the British empire, was especially apparent in the controversies that developed over the question of defence in the late

nineteenth and early twentieth century. Membership in the imperial family might provide security, but it also involved sacrifice and compromise. Britain was beginning to pressure Canada to assume a greater degree of responsibility for her own defence -- within the context of a British plan. Of course, most Canadian "nationalists" would agree that it was necessary for Canada to take on a greater burden, not for the sake of service to the empire, but for the sake of national autonomy. With the introduction of his 1868 Militia Bill, George Etienne Cartier declared:

Three indispensable elements constitute a nation -- population, territory, and the sea. But the crown of the edifice -- also indispensable -- is military force. No people can lay claim to the title of a nation if it does not possess a military element -- the means of defence. ¹

But this recognition was tempered by the fact that it was risky and expensive to cut the apron strings altogether. The problem of defence was one of the more concrete manifestations of the tension in the imperial relationship. Britain was in no position to force Canada to adopt any policy, and could only rely on pressure and influence. One of the chief agents of that influence was the governor general. Yet Canada's status as a colony with responsible government dictated that political pressure was a force to be reckoned with. And here, too, the governor general was pressed into service, advising the British government of Canadian political realities which would limit imperial goals.

It was generally characteristic of Lord Stanley to put greatest emphasis on this second aspect of his role. Correspondence between Stanley and the Colonial Office reveals a tendency on the governor general's part to identify with the

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George Etienne Cartier, as quoted in Richard A. Preston, Canada and "Imperial Defense:" A Study in the origins of the British Commonwealth's defense organization, 1867 - 1919 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1967), 55.

Canadian view on many points. Stanley would advise the Colonial Secretary of what "we" in Canada felt, and often appears to have won the Colonial Office over to Canada's position. Further, there is evidence of real friendship and affection between the governor general and Prime Minister John A. Macdonald. Letters between the two reveal a spirit of candour and co-operation. Stanley was frank when he had reservations about British policy and admitted to Macdonald when he "did not quite like the tone" of an imperial despatch. ²

Yet he did not shrink from criticizing Canadian policy when he felt circumstances warranted. Like most of his successors, Stanley found Canada's military status to be below standard. The governor general's position as commander-in-chief was only an honorary role, but most governors general felt entitled to tender advice on military affairs. ³ The fact that Stanley had served as British secretary of state for war made it especially likely that he would take an interest in Canada's military affairs. ⁴ Stanley complained to Macdonald that there was "very much to be desired" in the militia's arms, equipment, and, above all, discipline. He warned him that

it is openly said that the disposal of the money voted for the Militia, is not always that for which it is voted, nor is it influenced only by considerations of the well being of the force, or of its proper equipment. I have reason to believe that there is a widespread feeling of distrust amongst the militia, on this point. ... I have set, and always will set, my face against the Dominion Government being asked for too much, but I should be grievously wanting in my duty if I were to pretend that things are satisfactory at present. If we do not keep our eyes open, and our hands fairly ready, we may

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Stanley to Macdonald, 6 September 1889, Stanley Papers.

³ Desmond Morton, Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia, 1868 - 1904 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 17.

⁴ Ibid., 98.

have a bitter awakening some day.⁵

Stanley also tried to impress upon his ministers the same sense of urgency that the British government felt over the defencelessness of the Pacific. Russia's growing naval power in the 1880's made Esquimalt increasingly important in British eyes, but Canada seemed determined to do the minimum.⁶ The issue dragged on for years until a formula for sharing costs was agreed upon.

Also at issue was the status of the general officer commanding the Canadian militia (G.O.C.), a British regular army officer loaned to Canada. The duplication of responsibility for the militia between the G.O.C. and the Canadian minister of militia was a source of potential conflict. Stanley and his successors voiced concern over the degree to which patronage and political deal-making interfered with the efficiency of the Canadian militia. The scenario of an eager and earnest G.O.C. attempting to sweep aside barriers to the effectiveness of Canada's fighting force was often repeated throughout this period. Inevitably, each would encounter stubborn resistance and accusations of heavy-handedness. These imperial officers were especially vulnerable to charges of failing to appreciate Canada's political autonomy.

When General Middleton resigned as G.O.C. in 1890 amid charges of theft of some confiscated furs, Stanley pleaded with Macdonald that the new man be given a fair chance. He expressed his earnest hope that the new G.O.C. "be allowed to do his best to make the Militia a reality as a defensive force."⁷

Middleton's successor, Colonel Ivor Herbert, considered

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Stanley to Macdonald, 20 July 20 1890, Stanley Papers.

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Morton, 90.

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Stanley to Macdonald, 20 July 20 1890, Stanley Papers.

Stanley to be a reliable ally in the fight to make Canadians conscious of defense.⁸ But the Earl of Aberdeen, who assumed the viceregal office in 1893 had other interests. The Aberdeens were reform-minded Liberals who were indifferent to military matters. In fact, it has been suggested that Aberdeen's early replacement in November 1898 by the Earl of Minto, an experienced imperial soldier, was calculated to re-invigorate the flagging spirit of militarism in Canada.⁹ Minto's military career had taken him to the Russo-Turkish war in 1877, the Afghan War in 1879, and to Cape Colony in 1881 as Lord Robert's private secretary. He had participated in the occupation of Egypt in 1882 and in 1883 had come to Canada as Lansdowne's military secretary. In this capacity he had raised a force of Canadian voyageurs, lumbermen, and Indians for a famous imperial adventure up the Nile to the Sudan in a failed attempt to rescue General Charles Gordon. Minto had also served as an aide-de-camp to General Middleton during Canada's 1885 Northwest Rebellion. In the same year that Minto was appointed governor general Major General Gascoigne was replaced as G.O.C. with the more vigorous and forceful Colonel Edward Hutton -- "a man cast in the pro-consular mould."¹⁰ Desmond Morton maintains that Joseph Chamberlain was intent on regaining the voice and influence in Canadian defense policy which Britain had given up with the withdrawal of the garrisons in 1870.¹¹ In fact, Morton seems to subscribe to the existence of an imperial conspiracy to impose British defense standards on Canada in the face of political opposition. Hutton and Minto, Morton asserts, "tried to work out their future relationship to prevent their

⁸ Morton, 107.

⁹ Penlington, 80.

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Morton, 133.

¹¹ Ibid., 131.

collaboration becoming too apparent to Canadians." ¹² Both were members of the "Wolseley Ring," proteges of the influential Victorian hero Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet Wolseley. Hutton and Minto had been educated together at Eton and shared many military exploits. ¹³

Hutton's determination to shake up the Canadian militia put severe strains on his friendship with Minto. While Minto agreed with many of Hutton's criticisms of the militia, he was frequently embarrassed by Hutton's lack of tact. Hutton clashed immediately with Dr. Frederick Borden, the minister of militia, who seemed to bear the brunt of Hutton's public attacks. Minto confessed to Prime Minister Laurier, "To tell you the truth I am very anxious he [Hutton] should avoid public speaking and I have told him so." ¹⁴

Nevertheless, Minto came to Hutton's defence in an awkward dispute which erupted in 1899 over the latter's determination to force the resignation of Lieutenant-Colonel James Domville. While Domville was acknowledged to have a poor army record and a reputation for drunkenness and questionable business practices, he was a Liberal M.P., and his cause became a focus for debate over the authority of the G.O.C. ¹⁵ Hutton sent Borden a strong memo complaining of political interference in the discipline and good order of the force. The letter was shared with the rest of Laurier's cabinet, and found its way to Minto. Minto deflected a major clash by stressing the personal nature of Hutton's note, and by acknowledging that Hutton had been wrong to place Domville on leave without the minister's approval. In return, he won a promise that Domville would be retired at the end of the session. Hutton was delighted with his "victory," believing

¹² Ibid., 138.

¹³ Penlington, 135-142.

¹⁴ Minto, as quoted in Gundy, 34.

¹⁵ Gundy, 34.

that Minto backed him "like a hero."¹⁶

Unfortunately, Hutton appears to have drawn courage from Minto's support. He was confident in the governor general's friendship and understood that Minto shared his military enthusiasm.¹⁷ But Hutton failed to appreciate the political realities that Minto was forced to accommodate. While many comparisons might be drawn between the positions of the governor general and the G.O.C., the latter's more specific mandate tended to make it even more contentious. Mindful of Hutton's predicament, Minto tried to protect the G.O.C. when he could. But Hutton's strong convictions, and predilection for expressing them, did not make it easy. In November 1899 Minto responded to a critical note from Laurier concerning one of the G.O.C.'s less discreet speeches:

I have carefully read over his speech & I understand him to have alluded in a broad sense to well recognized Imperial questions which certainly are closely connected with the Militia force which he commands, but which I hardly think can be classed as politics in the ordinary sense of the word...¹⁸

Despite criticism from Canadian government quarters, Hutton won high praise in Britain. Wolseley wrote to Minto: "How well Curly Hutton had done and is still doing. I hear your Ministers are very jealous of him & of his popularity. I am writing to thank him for his good work."¹⁹ Minto seems to have cherished the hope that Hutton's popularity with the people of Canada, and the justice of his cause, would outweigh the

¹⁶ Morton, 147.

¹⁷ Miller, 65.

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Minto to Laurier, 8 November 1899, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 1, 183.

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Wolseley to Minto, 1 December 1899, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 1, 201.

antipathy of the government. As it became apparent that Hutton would be forced out, Minto found himself wishing that it might spark a debate on Canada's defence policy and the role of the G.O.C. He confided to Joseph Chamberlain that he believed Hutton should not resign, but insist upon an enquiry which would bring everything into the open.²⁰

Indeed, it seems that Minto was prepared to see Laurier's government defeated on the issue. He pointed out to the prime minister that all of Hutton's predecessors had failed and that the position was impossible for "any officer worth his salt."²¹ Minto's memo, meant for Laurier's eyes alone, was discussed in cabinet, and the governor general found himself under fire for failing to observe constitutional principles. Minto quickly assured the government that he did not dispute any of the constitutional principles outlined in a lengthy discourse prepared by the minister of justice. The dispute, he argued, was not about principles but about the "best practical adaptation of them and as to the proper line of demarcation between civil and military authority in regard to the smooth working of the mechanism of an army."²²

At last, however, Minto had to recognize that excessive advocacy of the G.O.C.'s position could topple his own. He had already detected a certain amount of strain in his formerly cordial relations with Laurier. "At the drawing room in the evening... Sir Wilfrid Laurier seemed very stiff toward Her Excellency and me," Minto recorded.²³ He dutifully signed the order-in-council requesting Hutton's recall and admitted to

²⁰ Minto to Joseph Chamberlain, 7 January 1900, Lord Minto's Canadian Paper, vol. 1, 228.

²¹ Minto, Memorandum, 27 January 1900, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 1, 249.

²² Minto, as quoted in Buchan, 147.

²³ Minto, as quoted in Gundy, 35.

Chamberlain that to press the government would be interpreted as "unjustifiable imperial pressure and resented accordingly."²⁴

Minto's prediction proved correct, however, and it was not long before the authority of the G.O.C. again became the focus of bitter wrangling. Major General the Earl of Dundonald accepted the post in 1902. Minto was pleased with the appointment of this high-profile candidate, who had won distinction in the South African War. Chamberlain thought the Canadians fortunate to acquire Dundonald: "It is more than they deserve. Nevertheless, I have no doubt that they will quarrel with him after a time," he noted prophetically.²⁵ Dundonald's avowed goal of making the government take the militia seriously and stop playing politics with it was bound to lead to trouble. On his second day, Dundonald was reportedly counselled by Laurier that he "must not take the Militia seriously, for though it is useful for suppressing internal disturbances, it will not be required for the defence of the country, as the Monroe doctrine protects us against enemy aggression."²⁶ Minto himself wisely cautioned Dundonald not to "ride... the horse too hard."²⁷ There were difficulties, but they were not insurmountable if delicately handled, he advised. Dundonald was quick to copy the errors of his predecessor, however, and spoke publicly about the shortcomings of Canadian defence policy. Minto was forced to distance himself from the G.O.C. when he imprudently criticized the government for jobbery in militia affairs.²⁸ It was

²⁴ Minto, as quoted in Buchan, 148.

²⁵ Chamberlain, as quoted in Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 1, 109 note.

²⁶ Dundonald, as quoted in Gundy, 36.

²⁷ Minto to Dundonald, 26 March 1902, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 2, 136.

²⁸ Minto to Lady Minto, 13 June 1904, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 2, 472.

frustrating to Minto to see Dundonald's rashness strain the imperial tie which he worked hard to cultivate. He complained of Dundonald:

His vanity is beyond bounds.... in all his conversations with me he has been entirely carried away by the idea of his own popularity and the fact that he is posing as the popular saviour of the position. He has worked the press and opposition members in a way in which no Govnt. could stand.²⁹

By the summer of 1904 it was apparent that the Canadian government could no longer tolerate Dundonald's open criticism. While Minto shared the conviction that Canadian defence policy needed improvement, he did not condone the G.O.C.'s actions and was not prepared to provoke a constitutional crisis over the issue. He readily agreed to support the order-in-council requesting Dundonald's recall but considered the affair to be the most disagreeable episode of his term.³⁰

Dundonald proved to be the last G.O.C. His failure, and that of his predecessors, demonstrated that the position had been outgrown. The military relationship between Canada and Britain, as one aspect of the imperial tie, had strained for re-definition for many years. The new Militia Act of 1904, which provided for a Militia Council under the leadership of the minister of militia, was more in keeping with Canada's politically autonomous status. The chief-of-staff, who was in a subordinate position, took the place of the old G.O.C. Minto was adamant that this position should be filled by a British officer and so keep alive the tradition of British influence in Canadian military affairs. In a letter to Lyttelton, colonial secretary after 1903, Minto worried that "the throwing open of the Canadian militia command is to the thinking people the loss of a link in the Imperial chain ... the beginning of the end of

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Minto, as quoted in Morton, 190.

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Underhill, 123.

Imperial authority in Canada." ³¹ He was convinced that Canada simply did not possess men of sufficient background and experience to bring the militia up to modern standards. Further, his experience had shown him the danger party politics posed to military efficiency. A native-born officer would be easy prey to these influences, he believed. ³² When it became apparent that the Canadian government wished to appoint Colonel Percy Lake, a popular former quartermaster general, to the post, Minto was quick to back up the request. The War Office, and Lake himself, expressed reluctance, but Minto recognized that this appointment was the only chance of placing a British officer in the Canadian military system. His considerable influence with the candidate and the War Office turned the tide and Lake was sent to Canada. ³³

The controversy over the role of the G.O.C. was only one area in which Minto had to tread a thin line between Canadian and imperial objectives. The issue of Canadian participation in the Boer War was another. Minto's well-known commitment to the ideals of empire, coupled with his interest in military affairs, made it inevitable that he would be at the centre of this controversy. This debate earned Minto a long-standing historical reputation as a blunt, heavy-handed soldier who was unable to grasp the concept of dominion self-government. One of the most influential sources of this misconception is J.W. Dafoe's political biography, Laurier: A Study in Canadian Politics. Dafoe stresses the difficulties Laurier had with Minto,

a combination of country squire and heavy dragoon, who was sent to Canada as governor-general in 1898 to forward by every means in his power the Chamberlain policies. ...He busied himself at once and persistently in trying to induce the

³¹ Minto to Lyttelton, 7 March 1904, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 2, 433.

³² Buchan, 155.

³³ Morton, 194.

Canadian government to commit itself formally to the policy of supplying troops for Imperial Wars. ... With the outbreak of the South African War, Lord Minto regarded himself less as a governor-general than as Imperial commissioner charged with the vague and shadowy powers which go with that office; and Sir Wilfrid had, in consequence, to instruct him on more than one occasion that Canada was a self-governing country and not a military satrapy.³⁴

General Hutton's own bragging assertion about the role he and Minto played contributes to this impression. In a letter to Minto, dated January 10, 1902, Hutton boasts that

As years pass we shall ... more clearly realize the importance of our successful action in indirectly forcing the weak-kneed and vacillating Laurier Government with their ill disguised French & pro-Boer proclivities to take a part -- nay even a leading part -- in the great movement which has drawn the strings of our Anglo-Saxon British Empire so close that for years to come we may count upon all our elements uniting to form front to all the world combined if need be.³⁵

That Minto was an ardent supporter of British imperialism is indisputable. Yet he cannot with justice be charged with dragooning Canada into the Boer War. Indeed, it is clear that Minto had some real reservations about the necessity of the war at all. In a letter to his brother, written days before the outbreak of the war, Minto expressed his suspicion that "Chamberlain and the British public had been utterly misinformed" about the situation in South Africa. He concurred with rumours that "the British residents by their manner and language were doing everything in their power to alienate the loyal Dutch." He hoped that things had not gone so far that the British government would be unable to avoid war without sacrificing honour. He went on:

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J. W. Dafoe, Laurier: A Study in Canadian Politics (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1963), 57.

35

Hutton to Minto, 10 January 1902, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 2, 112.

No doubt there is a great deal to be said for it in an Imperial sense -- but from the point of view of a Canadian statesman, I do'nt see why they shd. commit their country to the expenditure of lives and money for a quarrel not threatening Imperial safety and directly contrary to the opinion of a Colonial Govt. at the Cape. They are loyal here to a degree and would fight for the old country if in a difficulty to the last man -- but I confess I doubt the advisability of their taking part now, from the point of view of the Canadian Gov't. Sir Wilfrid told me the other day that if the question was reconsidered he shd. call a cabinet council and ask me to be present. I hope he wo'nt -- for I shd. be in a nice muddle -- my chief at home thirsting for blood, all my friends here ditto -- and myself while recognising Imperial possibilities -- also seeing the iniquity of the war -- and that the time for Colonial support has hardly yet arrived.³⁶

Furthermore, Minto recognized the political difficulties that the participation issue raised in Canada. He assured Chamberlain that "the British determination to assist the Mother Country would be irresistible by any government," but reminded him that the French Canadian population would not feel the same imperial spirit.³⁷ In spite of all these concerns, when it became apparent that there would be an imperial war in South Africa, Minto was anxious to see Canada demonstrate her loyalty to Britain.

Minto was adamant that, if a contingent of Canadian troops were offered, it must be a spontaneous offer based on Canadian sentiment, not imperial pressure. He made no secret of the fact that he would be pleased to see such an offer made, but firmly maintained that Britain had no power of coercion. Surprisingly, Laurier interpreted things differently. He took section 79 of the Militia Act quite literally and believed that Her Majesty might indeed call out the troops within or without Canada in

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Minto to Arthur Elliot, 28 September 1899, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 1, 130-1.

37

Minto to Joseph Chamberlain, 25 July 1899, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 1, 106-7.

time of war or insurrection.³⁸ Nevertheless, it rankled when Chamberlain issued a circular to all the colonies thanking them for their offers of assistance, and providing details about the form such assistance should take. The Canadian government was in the awkward position of having been thanked for an offer never made. Suspicions were cast on Minto and on General Hutton, who were imagined to have made offers without consulting the responsible ministers. Laurier testily informed the governor general that "the clandestine attempt which is made to force our hands must unavoidably result in impeding rather than in facilitating whatever action we may have to take." He did, however, agree that there should be a force sent "in consonance with the importance of Canada."³⁹ The whole episode was not quickly forgotten and it is significant that the new Militia Act of 1904 explicitly stated that the militia was intended for Canadian defence and could only be called out by the dominion government.⁴⁰ The ultimate offer to equip and transport a contingent of volunteers to South Africa was made with an awareness that a failure to do so would be politically dangerous. John Buchan laments that "such a decision carried no honour with it, and incontestably they lost in prestige, for Canada had appeared last in the list of imperial contributaries."⁴¹ Minto was disgusted by the government's preoccupation with party politics. He confided to Wolseley that he found the whole business "perfectly sickening."⁴² It was

³⁸ Penlington, 190.

³⁹ Laurier to Minto, 12 October 1899, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 1, 146.

⁴⁰ Neuendorff, 107.

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Buchan, 142.

⁴² Minto to Wolseley, 22 October 1899, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 1, 169.

only "the insistence of public opinion in Canada" that forced the government to act, he informed Chamberlain.⁴³

Nevertheless, "popular enthusiasm" prevailed in the end and Minto was able to see off the first Canadian contingent in a stirring ceremony at the Citadel. In a letter to Lady Minto, he described the splendid singing and procession which preceded his call for the men to remove their helmets for three cheers for the queen. Minto seemed unable to conceal his glee that Sir Wilfrid's speech fell flat while he, in a handsome blue uniform and cocked hat, captured the admiration of a crowd newly charged with imperial zeal. "Your humble boy," he confided,

has been the hero of the hour -- the papers are full of my speeches, and extracts from them, and I think I may say to my girl I have put a lot of life into things and have spoken out -- though I have never said anything I was not entirely justified in saying on behalf of the people of Canada.⁴⁴

Even the mayor of Montreal, he had heard, "was singing patriotic English songs between hiccups at the Frontenac!"⁴⁵ Minto may have mistaken imperial enthusiasm for evidence of personal popularity, but it is evident that zeal for empire had reached a fever pitch.

Between Victoria's Diamond Jubilee extravaganza in 1897 and the Boer War in 1899, imperial sentiment rose to new heights in Canada. The achievements of the Canadian contingents in South Africa were the source of a new confidence and pride. In the exultation which followed the Battle of Paardeberg in March 1900, Laurier exclaimed in the House of Commons:

Is there a man whose bosom did not swell with pride ... the

⁴³ Minto to Chamberlain, 27 October 1899, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 1, 171.

⁴⁴ Minto to Lady Minto, 3 November 1899, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 1, 179-80.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

pride of the consciousness that day the fact had been revealed to the world that a new power had arisen in the west[?] ⁴⁶

Now seemed the perfect opportunity for Britain to harness the prevailing sentiment and formalize the system of imperial obligations and responsibilities which had remained undefined.

In March 1900 Chamberlain wrote to Minto:

It seems to me that in the present state of opinion in the Colonies something practical might be done towards that closer union which we have constantly kept in view. ⁴⁷

The same question had surfaced during the 1897 Colonial Conference but had met with resistance from Laurier, who politely maintained that the current arrangements were satisfactory. Now, the colonial secretary was able to hold out the incentive of a role in the final peace settlement for the colonies, an appeal to national pride. Of course, Chamberlain was quick to add that

we could not undertake to be guided by the views of Canadian or Australian representatives if these should differ from those of loyal colonists at the Cape or Natal and of the majority in this country; but we should be most willing to give an advisory voice... ⁴⁸

Chamberlain envisioned an Imperial Council sitting permanently in London and acting as permanent advisers to the secretary of state for the colonies. Not surprisingly, one of the main questions this body would address would be imperial defence.

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Laurier, as quoted in Robert Page, "Canada and the Imperial Idea in the Boer War Years," Journal of Canadian Studies 5 (February 1970): 47.

⁴⁷

Joseph Chamberlain in Richard H. Wilde, "Joseph Chamberlain's Proposal of an Imperial Council in March 1900," Canadian Historical Review 37 (September 1956): 227.

⁴⁸

Ibid., 227.

"Some understanding," he hoped,

might be come to as to the number and character of the forces which would be permanently maintained by each Colony, their organization and employment in time of war, as well as schemes for the naval defence of the Empire. ⁴⁹

Minto was pressed into service determining how Canadians might receive such a scheme. He spoke to Laurier and other cabinet members, opposition M.P.s, and influential public figures. Minto tailored his pitch to the individual, at times appealing to colonial rivalry. How would it look, he asked, if Australia or New Zealand got ahead of Canada in approving the scheme, just as they had in sending contingents to South Africa? ⁵⁰ Notwithstanding these tactics, the governor general was not able to offer Chamberlain much encouragement for the project. The colonial secretary deemed Minto's response "not very satisfactory." ⁵¹ Minto had found that there was great reluctance to commit to any scheme which might involve increased expenditures. Laurier complained that Canada's need for railway and canal building, and expenses arising from the militia, made it difficult for her to contribute more. ⁵² Further, Laurier was annoyed by Minto's attempts to canvass opposition members about the proposed council. He would not welcome pressure from Chamberlain and ardent Canadian imperialists to pursue a policy which was likely to divide French and English Canadians. ⁵³

Quebec opinion aside, it was obvious that there was a fundamental difficulty with the scheme -- one which was as basic

⁴⁹

Ibid., 227.

⁵⁰

Ibid., 237.

⁵¹ Ibid., 231.

⁵² Ibid., 238.

⁵³ Ibid., 238.

as the whole imperial relationship. As much as English Canadians may have been drawn to the idea of empire, they were loath to put those feelings to any practical application. It was unthinkable to put Canada's policy on any important matter - especially defence -- into the hands of an outside body, even one in which Canada played a leading role. The country's sense of political autonomy was still too fragile to consider giving any of it up.

Minto, to his credit, recognized this truth which seemed to elude his London superiors. In a letter to Dr. Parkin, Headmaster of Upper Canada College and trustee of the Rhodes Scholarship, Minto acknowledged that

Canadian public opinion is pronouncedly adverse to any pledge or bargain by which the Dominion should bind herself to supply men or money to an Imperial war ... I have not the slightest doubt that it would be a serious mistake to ask any Canadian govnt to do so ... under present conditions we should get much more by leaving the question of Imperial military co-operation to the sentiment of the Canadian people.

"On the other hand," he continued, "it had been in our power to encourage that sentiment and again we are losing the opportunity." ⁵⁴ Despite a reputation for clumsy heavy-handedness, Minto seems to have encapsulated the very essence of the governor general's role in this remark. By the end of his term he had come to a realistic understanding of what he could and could not achieve. Coercion was impossible, and anything that even looked like coercion was likely to raise a storm of indignant protest in the Dominion. Yet there was room for the governor general to work in a more subtle way to promote accord between Canada and the mother country, and to promote the interests of each.

It is somewhat ironic that around 1904 the British government's position on Canada's defence seems to have changed.

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Minto, as quoted in Underhill, 128.

Minto, who had previously been in the position of trying to mitigate imperial pressure on the dominion, was now in the position of urging his home government not to give up on Canada altogether. Changing relations among world powers made Britain abandon her earlier concern with defending Canada against the remote possibility of American aggression. There were too many other, more pressing, concerns and British strategists were gradually coming around to the realization that it was not even possible to make adequate preparations against that contingency -- a fact to which Canada had long been resigned.⁵⁵

Minto worked to combat this new attitude in the British government. He believed that ties of mutual dependence in defence matters were among the last threads that bound the dominion to Britain. It was for this reason that he urged the retention of a British officer in the position of chief-of-staff, which replaced the old G.O.C. under the provision of the new Militia Act of 1904. Minto tried to exert whatever influence he could in the drafting of the new Act. He had it withdrawn several times for revision, but in the end was bound to accept changes he found unpalatable. "I could then no longer object to [Frederick] Borden's proposals," he admitted, "and my only course was to help the new order of things as well as I could."⁵⁶ Minto was especially concerned about the concurrent British proposal to transfer the naval bases of Halifax and Esquimalt to dominion control. In March 1904 he pleaded his case with Lyttelton, arguing that it was not only a matter of military efficiency, but one on which the entire Imperial connection depended. There were factors, he insisted, that "can only be understood by those intimately acquainted with the chief

⁵⁵ Morton, 195.

⁵⁶ Minto, as quoted in Underhill, 129.

actors on the scene." ⁵⁷ A Colonial Office minute scrawled on the despatch notes that "Lord Minto is evidently annoyed that his views have not been accepted, and implies that H.M.G. are acting in ignorance of the real situation. " ⁵⁸ Like so many on-the-spot administrators, Minto felt frustrated by the home government's stubborn refusal to appreciate his superior grasp of colonial conditions and attitudes.

Grey inherited this problem when he succeeded Minto in 1904. The British government was determined to withdraw its forces from Halifax and Esquimalt, without regard for how this might affect imperial relations. The new governor general agreed with Minto that it would be best if Canada would agree to assume the expenses of maintaining a British force, but realized that this was unlikely. Instead, he assured the Colonial Office that the Canadian government was on the verge of offering to assume the entire responsibility for manning the garrison and paying the expenses. Grey tried to apply pressure to speed the process along, but Laurier stalled, telling him it was necessary to wait for the cabinet's decision. Grey was horrified to learn in January 1905 that the War Office would be announcing its intention within a few days to withdraw the garrisons, unless a positive answer were received. Luckily, the Canadian commitment to assume responsibility for the garrisons was made before this could happen, and there was general satisfaction in Canada over this new step toward mature nationhood. Grey was relieved that the issue had resolved itself, but was incensed at the attitude of the British government. To him, it seemed that they had, through impatience, put imperial relations needlessly at risk. He hoped that "Laurier may never hear that His Majesty's

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Minto to Lyttelton, 7 March 1904, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 2, 432.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 432 note.

Government were considering the steps mentioned in your letter." ⁵⁹
 "Surely," he remonstrated,

the departmental necessities of the Admiralty and the War Office should be subordinate to the national policy of your department particularly when you had my personal assurance that the offer from Canada to assume the whole responsibility would be made if only a little time were allowed me to get my ministers up to the position of making a formal offer. ⁶⁰

To Grey, it was important that the replacement of the garrisons be viewed as an opportunity to enhance Canadian nationalism. Yet it was equally important that this development be seen in the context of imperial unity. The chief value in having Canada assume the responsibility lay in the fact that it was an imperial responsibility. ⁶¹ Like so many of his predecessors, Grey would find the task of reconciling British and Canadian interests difficult, especially over an issue as sensitive as defence.

Shortly after Grey arrived, an astute observer, who recognized the pitfalls of the position, penned some advice in verse to the new governor general:

Hints to His Excellency Earl Grey and the New Governor General

I hope your Excellent Lordship,
 Won't think me indiscreet,
 If I should give some gentle hints
 Before we chance to meet.
 No doubt you'll have to visit us
 And ramble to and fro,
 Be sure you only speak about,
 The weather and the snow.

Not long ago a zealous Lord

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Grey, as quoted in Hallett, 61.

⁶⁰ Grey, as quoted in Hallett, 62.

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Hallett, 63.

Did think it worth his while
 To hint about the weakness of
 Our country's fighting style,
 He bade a fond farewell to us,
 And now has learned to know,
 He should have really criticized
 Our weather and our snow.

You may talk about our navy,
 That scans us with a care,
 But do not even dast a hint,
 That we should pay our share.
 You may sing the army's praises,
 That guards our home and King,
 But if we're asked to share its pay,
 Why! That's a different thing.

Perhaps you'd like to leave your mark,
 But now before you try,
 Just figure out how you will miss,
 Old parties' jealous eye.
 But if you want to shun all strife,
 When going to and fro,
 Just talk and sing the praises of
 Our weather and the snow. ⁶²

It is not surprising that Grey did not follow this advice. But it is surprising that he seems to have escaped much of the criticism that rained down on his predecessors. Canada's defence -- especially naval defence-- was a constant theme in Grey's speeches, yet he was enormously popular during his Canadian term. In fact, Grey's constant references to the navy question raised more criticism in England than in Canada. Even as jealous a defender of Canadian autonomy as J. S. Ewart allowed that he could find nothing to criticize in Grey's references to imperial defence. Lyttelton speculated that Grey's English critics were overlooking the personal charm which enabled the governor general to tread on such dangerous ground

without giving offence. ⁶³ On one occasion the Toronto Star came to Grey's defence, arguing that

It is to be presumed that a British statesman of sufficient standing to qualify him for the Governor Generalship of the first colony of the Empire would have a mind of his own with regard to public questions; and we would far rather that he should speak his mind than that he should waste our time and his own in telling us how exceedingly green our grass is, and how much better we are than other people he has had the good fortune to meet. ⁶⁴

Certainly Grey did not shrink from discussing his views on important issues, even if he did tend to resort to symbolic language on these occasions. In one characteristic speech, he invoked the guilt-inspiring image of the "Old Mother" making sacrifices for her unappreciative child:

Do not think that I complain. The people of the United Kingdom do not complain. Burdened as the old country is with debt which she has incurred in building up the British Empire; burdened as she is with the maintenance of a poverty to which this young land is fortunately a stranger; and which is the saddest part of the inheritance in her splendid achievements, the lion heart of old England is proud to think that the little islands set in the silver seas across the Atlantic, so small that they could be swallowed up thirty times in your vast Dominion, are yet carrying, practically single-handed, the whole burden of Empire. ⁶⁵

Grey criticized Canada's willingness to "ride in the boat without taking a turn at the oars,"⁶⁶ but maintained in principle that Canada should not be unduly pressured. It would be more

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Hallett, 54.

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Toronto Star, as quoted in Hallett, 54-5.

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Grey, as quoted in J. Castell Hopkins, "Earl Grey's Administration in Canada," The Canadian Magazine 35 (July 1910): 228.

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Grey, as quoted in Hallett, 57.

effective, he thought, to praise Canada for what she had done, than to criticize her shortcomings. ⁶⁷

Despite these good intentions, Grey's resolution did lapse from time to time. He urged the formation of Navy Leagues, but tried to keep his advocacy secret because of Laurier's disapproval. When a Navy League pamphlet appeared in B.C. bearing the caption "approved by His Excellency the Governor General," Grey quickly had the offending words removed. ⁶⁸ He felt frustrated by Canadian newspapers' failure to play up the importance of maintaining naval supremacy in the face of an intensive German naval building programme. It was only in March 1909, as it became apparent that Germany's dreadnoughts were a force to be reckoned with, that some of the British hysteria began to rub off on Canadians. A satisfied Grey remarked that nothing was as useful as a good scare. "We can never be sufficiently grateful to the Kaiser for the service he has rendered us in making every loyal subject of the King realize the privilege he enjoys in having been born a Briton," he wrote. ⁶⁹ Unfortunately, Grey allowed wishful thinking to cloud his perceptions of Canadian opinion at times. In March 1909 he assured the Colonial Office that "Canada will be a solid unit in its determination to assist Motherland in maintaining naval supremacy." ⁷⁰ In reality, of course, things were not so cut and dried.

Canada was embroiled in an acrimonious political debate over the navy question in 1909. At issue were the alternatives of building a Canadian navy or contributing to the purchase of British dreadnoughts. Grey felt that the latter course would be a welcome demonstration of loyalty, yet he favoured the Liberal

⁶⁷ Hallett, 56.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 274.

⁶⁹ Grey, as quoted in Hallett, 265.

⁷⁰ Grey, as quoted in Hallett, 269.

government's plan to institute a new Canadian navy. He was confident that this force would always come to Britain's aid in any event.⁷¹ While Robert Borden and anglophone Conservatives echoed British opinion and agitated for contributions for British dreadnoughts, French-Canadian Conservatives wanted neither a navy nor contributions. They were scornful of the planned "tin pot navy" and charged Grey with pressuring Laurier to pursue his imperialist policies. Henri Bourassa persisted in referring to the Naval Service Bill as "Grey's Bill."⁷² Goldwin Smith, too, saw the Navy Bill as the work of "a mischief-making Governor General" and "a pernicious band of local jingoes."⁷³ Grey left little doubt as to his support of the Liberal naval policy. Through the Conservative failure to support this plan, they "have again earned their title of the Stupid Party," he snorted.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, Grey's vigorous support was the last thing that Laurier needed. The governor general failed to appreciate how delicate Laurier's position was. Grey urged Laurier to remove Louis-Phillipe Brodeur as minister of marine and appoint Clifford Sifton instead. He believed that the navy programme required an English-speaking minister with the proper imperial attitude.⁷⁵ But of course not every Canadian was an ardent imperialist, and many did not see the establishment of a navy as an essential feature of Canadian nationalism, as Grey insisted it was.⁷⁶ Grey had difficulty appreciating why the prime minister was annoyed when Grey informed him that during a

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Hallett, 270.

⁷² Ibid., 288.

⁷³ Goldwin Smith, as quoted in Hallett, 289.

⁷⁴ Grey, as quoted in Hallett, 285.

⁷⁵ Hallett, 271.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 281.

1909 viceregal tour he had assured the public that "you were ready to call upon Canadians, if necessary, to spend their last dollar and shed their last drop of blood" to maintain naval supremacy.⁷⁷ In fact, Grey has been implicated in the Liberal failure to win the "safe" Drummond-Arthabaska seat in the 1910 by-election. Mary Hallett observes that "Grey's 'help' to Laurier had become a weapon which Laurier's enemies in Quebec could use effectively against him."⁷⁸ Opposing the government in power was certain to cause trouble, but apparently lending too much support could be risky as well.

The final episode of Grey's adventures in the sphere of Canadian defence involved a fairly innocuous matter. This was the debate over the ensign to be flown by the new Canadian navy. The British navy had, of course, used the white ensign bearing St. George's Cross. It was proposed in Canada that the flag of the Canadian navy bear some distinguishing mark, while still retaining the original form. Grey was horrified at the notion of the ensign being defaced in any way. "A d---d lozenge in the fly would have been abominably unsightly," he complained.⁷⁹ Yet, others argued that, just as the cross of St. Andrew and St. Patrick had been superimposed on that of St. George in the Union Jack, political evolution demanded a change be made to the ensign for Canadian use.⁸⁰ Always relishing the role of peace-maker, Grey suggested that a beaver or maple leaf be added to the design. His home government vetoed the beaver idea, complaining that it looked too much like a muskrat, but Grey clung to the maple leaf plan. In fact, the idea grew in his mind to the point where it included a sewing project for Queen Mary. His enthusiasm bubbled over in a letter to Colonial

⁷⁷ Grey, as quoted in Hallett, 282.

⁷⁸ Hallett, 290.

⁷⁹ Grey to Harcourt, 21 November 1910, Grey Papers.

⁸⁰ Grey to "Loulou" (Harcourt), 19 December 1910, Grey Papers.

Secretary Harcourt:

I propose to get a Maple Leaf worked out here and then send it and the White Ensign presented to the "Niobe" by the Queen through you to Her Majesty, with the request that she will be good and kind and gracious enough to sew the Maple Leaf on the heart of the St. George's Cross with Her own Royal Fingers. If She will do this for Canada and stitch at the bottom of the Maple Leaf a darling little "M" she will fasten to the Crown even more securely than before, the loyalty of Canada.⁸¹

Harcourt managed to persuade Grey that the matter should be shelved until the Imperial Conference of 1911, at which point it was decided that the ships would fly the unadorned British ensign after all.

In all matters of defence -- from the concrete decisions concerning the status of the Canadian militia or navy, to the symbolic issue of the ensign -- Canadian ambivalence toward the imperial relationship was evident. The pride of belonging to the powerful British empire was set against the country's fragile sense of political autonomy. In all of these matters, the role of the governor general was critical. His position was symbolic of a relationship which was largely undefined but functioned as a kind of modus vivendi. As such, there was considerable leeway for individual interpretation, and it was often impossible to predict how much influence could be exercised on a given question. With military matters, as with all others under the scrutiny of the viceregal office, much depended on the propensities of the individual governor general. Aberdeen chose to exercise his influence in other spheres. The circumstances of Stanley's term allowed him to make recommendations, but did not dictate any particular sense of urgency. The highly-charged issues of Minto and Grey's tenure, and the personal leanings of each, gave defence questions a high profile. Each approached these matters with a view to furthering Canadian "nationalism" and the British imperial tie.

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Grey to Harcourt, 21 November 1910, Grey Papers.

POLITICAL ISSUES

Since the advent of responsible government in the 1840's, the governor general's political role had diminished, but not disappeared. The governor general was still expected to exercise a subtle form of leadership, and held important reserve powers which he might be called upon to exercise in the event of a crisis. As governor general, Aberdeen acknowledged that

aloof though he be from actual executive responsibility, his attitude must be that of ceaseless and watchful readiness to take part by whatever opportunities may be afforded to him.⁸²

In any Canadian political crisis, the governor general's position was an unenviable one. Inaction was liable to attract criticism, but vigorous action was almost guaranteed to do so. Even if the governor general stepped in to resolve an issue that seemed to threaten Canadian unity, he tended to be viewed as the human symbol of imperial control, and was resented accordingly. The governor general had a little more latitude in the exercise of his external function during this period. It was generally understood that he would act in a quasi-diplomatic role. All government correspondence to or from Britain or another country passed through his office. Thus, he often assumed the role of mediator in external, as well as internal, relations. Political and diplomatic decisions made in Britain might well be unpopular in Canada and the task often fell to the governor general to defend them. He might attempt to sway the British government from an intended course, usually claiming superior insight into local conditions, yet had ultimately to abide by the decision made across the Atlantic. Even if he won the Colonial Office over to his position, the agenda of other departments -- notably the Foreign Office -- might prevail. In both internal and

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Aberdeen, as quoted in Hopkins, "Lord and Lady Aberdeen," 171.

external matters, then, the role of the governor general in political affairs was far from extinct.

While the governor general was expected to remain aloof from direct participation in Canadian political affairs, providing a kind of moral leadership among the dominion's politicians was part of his unofficial mandate. This might take the form of smoothing out bitterness between parties, but might also involve reconciling individual members within a party. The most concrete example of this sort of leadership can be seen in the succession question, which occupied the attention of both Stanley and Aberdeen in the viceregal office. With this thorny issue, the governor general had to act decisively to appoint a prime minister who would retain the confidence of the party and the country, yet could not appear to be the agent of imperial influence in Canadian politics.

Canadian party politics have always been rendered problematic by the need to accommodate a cultural dualism. Lovell Clark suggests that the Conservative party, under Sir John A. Macdonald, was the first to recognize this fact, and arrive at a satisfactory compact which steered a course between potentially conflicting interests.⁸³ This accounts for the Conservative monopoly on political power in the years 1878 to 1896. Of course, strong leadership was key. The balancing act of accommodating interests so diverse depended on what Lord Stanley called "the benevolent despotism" of Macdonald.⁸⁴ Consequently, Macdonald's loss as leader was a grave threat to the party's fragile unity.

In May 1891 it became clear to Stanley that the prime minister's health was in jeopardy. The two had enjoyed an

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Lovell C. Clark, "The Conservative Party in the 1890's," Canadian Historical Association Report (1961): 58.

⁸⁴ Stanley to Julian Pauncefote, 11 October 1891, Stanley of Preston Papers, National Archives of Canada.

excellent rapport; Stanley asserted that their relationship had "ripened into something far more than ordinary friendship."⁸⁵ On these grounds, the governor general felt able to write candidly to Macdonald, asking him to consider delegating some of his duties to cabinet colleagues. Perhaps it was possible, he suggested, to lead the government from the other House, where his duties would be less onerous. "Forgive me -- for the motive's sake, if I have written very plainly," he apologized, "but I was brought up as a soldier, and not as a diplomatist."⁸⁶ Stanley praised the prime minister's bravery and self-sacrifice but urged him to preserve his health for the sake of his family, friends and party. Within the month, a stroke had rendered Macdonald speechless but he continued to govern by indicating yes or no to direct questions.⁸⁷ Stanley advised his ministers to carry on as best they could, but to avoid introducing any contentious questions.⁸⁸

Stanley was clearly uncomfortable with the situation. While other governors general have attracted criticism by being too quick to seize the initiative, Stanley was arguably overly scrupulous. One can almost see him wringing his hands as he laments to Knutsford:

the circes. here are unprecedented and ... I am compelled to a great extent to rely upon my own judgement. I must do my best and can only trust that I may receive the assistance and forbearance of H.M.G. at a crisis wh. may so seriously affect

⁸⁵ Stanley to Macdonald, ? May 1891, Stanley Papers.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Stanley to Salisbury, 4 June 1891, Stanley Papers.

⁸⁸ John Saywell, "The Crown and the Politicians -- The Canadian Succession Question, 1891 - 1896," Canadian Historical Review 37 (December 1956): 313.

the future of the Dominion.⁸⁹

To the annoyance of his Canadian cabinet, Stanley delayed taking any action on the succession question until after Macdonald's funeral. John Thompson fumed to his wife that "everybody [was] angry at the child at Rideau Hall for not doing something."⁹⁰

Although he was considered the logical successor to lead the Conservative party, Thompson declined Stanley's request to form a government, and recommended that J. J. C. Abbott be called upon. This was not an especially inspired choice, but was one calculated to avoid controversy. Abbott himself acknowledged that "I am here very much because I am not particularly obnoxious to anybody."⁹¹ Unfortunately, a little more than a year later, Abbott would be forced to step down because of ill health and Thompson agreed to take the reins of government after all. But fate intervened once again and the Conservative party was left leaderless by Thompson's sudden death in December 1894.

The task of appointing Thompson's successor fell to Aberdeen, who had succeeded Stanley in the viceregal office in 1893. Aberdeen would find that the succession question was one of many contentious issues that plagued his term. John Saywell has noted that it was fortunate Canada possessed a monarchical system "as the Governor General could do for the party what it could not do for itself."⁹² The divisions in the Conservative party were such that it was unlikely they could resolve the leadership

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Stanley, as quoted in Saywell, "The Crown and the Politicians," 313.

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Sir John Thompson, as quoted in Saywell, "The Crown and the Politicians," 313.

⁹¹ Clark, 62.

⁹² John Saywell, ed. "Introduction," The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, 1893 - 1898 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1960), xli.

question without outside mediation. Unfortunately, the warring factions directed their hostility toward the person of the mediator. Rather than being hailed as the saviour of the party, Aberdeen was eyed with narrow suspicion. Rumours circulated in the Conservative party that the governor general planned to summon the leader of the opposition, Wilfrid Laurier, to form a government if things did not resolve themselves before long.⁹³ Somehow, Aberdeen's influence in Canadian politics was never a source of pacification and reconciliation as it was meant to be; his very presence seemed to fan the flames and heighten bitterness between political factions.

Undoubtedly, his wife's ardent Liberalism was a factor. Ottawa Conservatives were irritated by Lady Aberdeen's insistence on placing a picture of the beloved "Mr. G." in every room of Rideau Hall.⁹⁴ Lady Aberdeen's journal praises Laurier's "attractive personality and eloquence" -- traits which she thought made him stand out among his lacklustre fellow members of Parliament.⁹⁵ Lady Aberdeen recorded her conviction that the Liberals under Laurier would win the next election. She was clearly fascinated by politics and had difficulty resisting the temptation to get involved in political affairs. Lord Aberdeen seems to have been of a placid nature, but his wife was quick to make up for any deficiency. Lady Aberdeen's daughter and biographer, Marjorie Pentland, describes this much-criticized tendency in a favourable light:

Ishbel interpreted the duty of wife as one who not only like Mrs Gladstone and Lady Rosebery, provided for her husband a serene background in private life, but as one who also thought and fought for him in all his affairs. Such a helpmate was

⁹³ Ibid., xliv.

⁹⁴ Saywell, "The Crown and the Politicians," 316.

⁹⁵ Lady Aberdeen, 13 December 1894, The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, 162.

invaluable to the gentle Johnny. ⁹⁶

Lady Aberdeen's journal is no mere chronicle of garden parties and costume balls. Instead, most of her attention is devoted to political analysis. The journal is filled with notes on her detailed -- and often covert -- communications with Canadian politicians.

Not surprisingly, the energetic and politically aware Lady Aberdeen took a keen interest in the question of minority education rights raised by the Manitoba Schools controversy. This was an issue that crystallized all of the basic problems and divisions which ran throughout Canadian political history. It involved the essential conflicts of "race" and religion, church and state, and province and dominion. ⁹⁷ Lady Aberdeen reflected on this difficulty in her journal:

A pretty pickle, is it not? I think it is often not recognised what a great difficulty has to be contended with in the government of this country through the necessity of every Administration having to be a coalition Ministry..." ⁹⁸

It was clear to the politically astute Lady Aberdeen that this was a vitally important issue in Canadian politics. She recognized that her husband, as governor general, was not supposed to be involved in such matters, but decided that it would be alright if she kept abreast of events. When the Aberdeens planned a lengthy holiday at their ranch in the Okanagan, she spoke to Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, a cabinet minister whom they admired and trusted, despite their antipathy toward his father, about her concerns. "I asked him... to write to me as a friend," she emphasized, "so that there might be no

⁹⁶ Pentland, 44.

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Saywell, "Introduction," The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, xxxiii.

⁹⁸ Lady Aberdeen, 13 July 1895, The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, 233-34.

impropriety about seeming to pass by the Premier, although indeed His Ex. has the fullest right to ask for advice from any of his Privy Councillors." ⁹⁹ The Aberdeens enjoyed their western holiday, which, to their credit, they combined with numerous official visits, until late October when Lady Aberdeen sought reassurance from Tupper that all was well at home:

Should I be very rude if I say that your silence has been very comforting to us? And at the same time we have felt sure that if there were any real reason for his Excellency's return to Ottawa you would let us know. ¹⁰⁰

Tupper was not able to reassure her. He sternly replied:

I understood my instructions to refer only to reasons existing in connection with actual cabinet dangers or cabinet necessities in fact... I feared it would be impertinent to express the opinion that a prolonged absence from the Capital affected the standing of the Government and the office of the Governor General. This I am now free, with your permission, ¹⁰¹ to say has been greatly discussed and I share the opinion.

Thus chastised, the Aberdeens returned promptly. The return of the viceregal couple to Ottawa gave Lady Aberdeen greater opportunity to follow the political debates which surrounded the Manitoba Schools question. In a manner reminiscent of Lady Dufferin during the days of the Pacific Scandal, Lady Aberdeen listened to the parliamentary proceedings. But she did not choose a discreet seat in the Commons gallery, as Lady Dufferin had done. Instead, she chose a prominent position on the floor

⁹⁹ Ibid., 18 July 1895, 246.

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Lady Aberdeen to Charles Hibbert Tupper, 23 October 1895, as quoted in Saywell, "Introduction," The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, vi.

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Charles Hibbert Tupper to Lady Aberdeen, 4 November 1895, as quoted in Saywell, "Introduction," The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, lvi.

of the House, between the Speaker and the Treasury Bench.¹⁰² Further, she opened yet another avenue of clandestine communication with a Canadian politician. At a time when the unity of the Conservative party was all but shattered, Lady Aberdeen began to receive missives from Laurier. They came through the person of Mrs. Cummings, a frequent visitor to Rideau Hall who shared Lady Aberdeen's association with the National Council of Women. Lady Aberdeen remarked that

as she is always in communication with me about the Council, her comings & goings will not be considered unnatural & it is well at such a juncture to have some means of communication with the leader of the Opposition.¹⁰³

This ongoing relationship between Laurier and the Aberdeen household would provide fertile ground for more accusations of political partisanship in the months ahead.

In the meantime, however, the Aberdeens took action which invited comparisons to Dufferin's well-meant but much criticized efforts to keep British Columbia in Confederation in the 1870s. Lady Aberdeen appealed to Prime Minister Tupper to let her know if there was "any opening where H.E. may intervene with advantage about Manitoba -- say in summoning any sort of Round Table Conference or suggesting it."¹⁰⁴ She also spoke to Archbishop Langevin and other Catholic clergy to see if anything could be done privately to advance the possibility of a settlement. In January 1896 the Aberdeens met with Sir Donald Smith in Montreal where it was agreed that the latter would

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Gwyn, 280.

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Lady Aberdeen, 7 January 1896, The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, 301.

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Lady Aberdeen to Charles Hibbert Tupper, 27 August 1895, as quoted in Saywell, "Introduction," The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, lxvi.

travel to Winnipeg "to confer privately and on his own responsibility with the leaders of both sides."¹⁰⁵ This initiative later provoked an impassioned outcry in the House of Commons when it was learned that the cabinet was unaware of Smith's visit. Smith openly admitted that he had decided on the plan after discussing it with the governor general, leading the opposition to demand to know if Canada had responsible government or not. Were the Crown and the government pursuing independent policies? An embarrassed Prime Minister Tupper had to acknowledge that he knew nothing of the mission, but would accept responsibility. In fact, Tupper later succumbed to pressure from Smith and the viceregal office and sent a commission to Winnipeg to seek resolution.¹⁰⁶ Of course, Aberdeen's initiative had been meant to preserve and promote Canadian unity, yet the very source of the initiative raised the hackles of jealous defenders of Canadian autonomy. Even when the governor general acted in what he perceived to be Canadian national interests, charges of heavy-handed viceregal interference were inevitable.

Lady Aberdeen's interest in Canadian politics extended also to the succession question, which had re-surfaced in 1894. Once again, her intervention strained the boundaries of constitutional propriety and led to accusations of partisanship. The days after the sudden death of Prime Minister Thompson found Lady Aberdeen eagerly analyzing the merits of individual candidates. "It is a delicate position," she decided, given that "we" don't know what Sir John's feelings were about it.¹⁰⁷ The Aberdeens had enjoyed a warm friendship with the late Prime

¹⁰⁵ Aberdeen, as quoted in Saywell, "Introduction," The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, l xv.

¹⁰⁶ Saywell, "Introduction," The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, lxvi-ii.

¹⁰⁷ Lady Aberdeen, as quoted in Saywell, "The Crown and the Politicians," 317.

Minister Thompson and his wife, and Lady Aberdeen rushed to console her widowed friend. When the question of who should follow in her husband's footsteps was raised, Lady Thompson was adamant on one point. She advised Lady Aberdeen that she would regard it as "an insult to my husband's memory" if Charles Tupper were sent for. Lady Aberdeen was able to reassure the widow on this point. "Never" if Lord Aberdeen could help it "should Sir Charles be again in Canadian politics," she vowed.¹⁰⁸ Mackenzie Bowell was ultimately chosen, despite the fact that he was seventy-five and an Orangeman; he was viewed as the least of several evils. His sway over the party was questionable and collapsed altogether when the divisive Manitoba Schools question came to the fore. In April 1896 Aberdeen was forced to perform what his wife described as the "distasteful job" of sending for Sir Charles Tupper, "a man whose whole life has been devoted to scheming & who will spare no means of any sort which may be of use in securing the return of his party with himself as Premier."¹⁰⁹ The Aberdeens were no doubt gratified to see Tupper's Conservatives defeated that same year and the Liberals come to power under Laurier.

Yet this political development, so congenial to the viceregal couple, coincided with the most bitter conflict of Aberdeen's term. Immediately following his defeat at the polls, Sir Charles Tupper visited the governor general to advise him on the appointment of a number of senators and judges. The defeated prime minister apparently maintained the fiction that the outcome of the election was still uncertain, so it would be business as usual until the recounts were done. In the meantime, however, a message from Laurier had arrived at Rideau Hall cautioning Aberdeen against accepting any appointments which might be recommended. The Senate was heavily dominated by

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 318.

¹⁰⁹ Lady Aberdeen, 27 April 1896, The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, 341.

Conservatives as it was, and Laurier, not incidentally, viewed the vacant positions as political rewards for defeated supporters. Naturally, Aberdeen's avowed reasons for refusing the appointments centred on constitutional arguments instead. It was inappropriate for Tupper to fill vacancies when a want of confidence had been shown in his government, the governor general maintained. Tupper cried foul, knowing Laurier's influence with the viceregal household. He proposed to resign - not because of electoral defeat, but because of Aberdeen's unconstitutional action and loss of confidence. Tupper soon realized that he would not be able to win much support in this constitutional struggle, however. He proposed a compromise whereby some of the minor recommendations be accepted and the whole constitutional disagreement be kept quiet. Aberdeen refused to budge, and Tupper was forced to back down altogether.¹¹⁰ John Saywell has noted that Canadian political scientists have tended to side with Tupper in this controversy. They have been critical of Aberdeen's actions, he writes, "presumably because it runs counter to the waning of the Crown's influence in Canada as the nation marched unerringly towards its constitutional heaven, Autonomy."¹¹¹ Saywell, by contrast, maintains that Aberdeen acted correctly, but acknowledges that he did possess a clear Liberal bias. It appears that the most that can be said is that Aberdeen made the right decision for the wrong reason. In any case, Tupper did not forget the humiliation, and remained the governor general's most outspoken critic during the remainder of Aberdeen's term.

Tupper tenaciously pursued his struggle against the viceregal office, which often manifested itself as antipathy toward the Aberdeens personally. His son published a polemic in the National Review on the functions of a governor general,

¹¹⁰ Saywell, "The Crown and the Politicians," 333-6.

¹¹¹ Saywell, "Introduction," The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, lxxxi.

complaining that Aberdeen's actions threatened the very existence of responsible government in Canada. He marvelled that "Lord Aberdeen virtually proposed to govern Canada himself between the 7th July and such time when a vote might be had adverse to his advisers!"¹¹² Aberdeen's defenders valiantly rallied around him, especially when they thought he was not being extended the courtesy due the queen's representative in Canada. W. A. Weir complained that Tupper would like to see the governor general's role reduced to a mere stamping machine. Weir found the tone of Tupper's article "offensive," and especially objected to Tupper's description of Aberdeen as "the head of the Liberal party in Canada."¹¹³ The rancour continued and Tupper seldom lost an opportunity to censure the governor general. The House of Commons debates of February 1898 record the Deputy Speaker's numerous rebukes to Sir Charles Tupper for referring disrespectfully to the governor general. Tupper complained that Aberdeen had been making speeches which endorsed a Liberal policy and opposed the Conservative position. Laurier scolded Tupper for his criticism of a man who was unable to appear in the Commons to defend himself. Besides, Laurier claimed, Aberdeen had not been speaking as the governor general, but simply as Lord Aberdeen. This explanation failed to satisfy and, after a spirited constitutional debate, Laurier was forced to accept responsibility for the governor general's utterances. He chided his opponent for "trying to raise a tempest in a teapot" and not giving Aberdeen the benefit of the doubt.¹¹⁴ Of course, given the history of enmity between Tupper and the

¹¹² Charles Hibbert Tupper, "The Functions of a Governor-General," The National Review (November 1896): 386.

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W. A. Weir, "The Functions of a Governor-General. A reply to Sir Charles H. Tupper," The Canadian Magazine 8 (January 1897): 272.

¹¹⁴ Sir Wilfrid Laurier, 8 February 1898, House of Commons Debates, Aberdeen Papers.

viceregal family, it was quite unlikely that he would ever pass up an opportunity to expose Aberdeen's foibles.

Lady Aberdeen's memoirs, and the biography written by her daughter, Marjorie Pentland, both complain of harsh treatment at the hands of Tupper. Pentland reports that the defeated Prime Minister returned a gold box that the Aberdeens had sent him as a golden anniversary gift. He refused to shake the governor general's hand in public and adopted what Pentland called a "vindictive" attitude, his "venomous" press "levelling every sort of jibe against 'the Aberdeens.'" ¹¹⁵ When Lady Aberdeen championed the cause of the Victorian Order of Nurses, Tupper, a medical doctor, led the fight against it. Pentland observes that "'the old war horse,' as he was called, saw a more effective revenge for his defeat" in attempting to thwart the establishment of the V.O.N. ¹¹⁶ Thus, for Lady Aberdeen, even a seemingly benign act of public beneficence turned into a source of bitter controversy.

The Aberdeens had broken the cardinal rule of avoiding political entanglements, and the repercussions were felt in everything they tried to do. Aberdeen might have benefitted by remembering the guidelines Elgin laid down in the 1840's for success in the viceregal office. The governor general, Elgin warned

must be content to tread along a path which is somewhat narrow and slippery, and to find that incessant watchfulness and some dexterity are requisite to prevent him from falling, on the one side into the neant of mock sovereignty, or on the other into the dirt and confusion of local factions. ¹¹⁷

Of course, because the Aberdeens had become involved in affairs

¹¹⁵ Pentland, 117.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 122.

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Elgin to Grey, 1847, in W. P. M. Kennedy, Documents of the Canadian Constitution, 1759 - 1915 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1918), 578.

that were clearly Canadian internal matters, their intervention seemed that much more intrusive. They were expected to exercise a subtle kind of moral leadership, but not to immerse themselves in factional disputes.

Earning the enmity of a Canadian politician was always a mistake, and the Aberdeens were not alone in their miscalculation of how far the viceregal powers could be extended. Minto found also that he invoked the wrath of a minister when he attempted to resolve an outstanding grievance. Minto's Yukon tour of 1900 was the occasion of a bitter dispute with the minister of the interior, Clifford Sifton. While visiting the Yukon goldfields, Minto swept aside official objection and accepted a petition from the Dawson Citizen Committee. The petition complained of territorial mismanagement and corruption, and demanded specific reforms to clean up the abuses. Minto not only received the petition, but had it read aloud publicly, signified his agreement with certain points, and promised to intercede with the government to bring about the needed reforms. As it happened, Sifton's announcement of extensive political and administrative changes came the very day of Minto's arrival. Minto won immediate popularity in the Yukon as "the possessor of a magician's wand before whom all grievances were to vanish."¹¹⁸ The Klondike Nugget exclaimed that if Minto were to give up his viceregal duties, he would have no trouble winning a Commons seat.¹¹⁹ Unfortunately, Sifton was less impressed. Minto's vocal criticism of local corruption and jobbery among party adherents seemed to point the finger of accusation directly at Sifton. Indeed, Minto was convinced of Sifton's corruption, and privately referred to him

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Minto, as quoted in Miller, 174.

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Klondike Nugget, as quoted in Miller, 174.

as "the villain."¹²⁰ The parallels to the trouble which the Aberdeens faced with Tupper are evident, for Minto's antagonist exerted considerable influence. Sifton was the owner of the Manitoba Free Press, whose editor, J. W. Dafoe seemed to keep up a constant attack on the governor general, focusing especially on Minto's alleged role in forcing Canadian participation in the Boer War. The seeds of animosity were sown before Minto had even arrived in Canada. The Manitoba Free Press suggested that the new governor general should avoid copying Aberdeen's example, and complained of the British practice of sending "second or third rate men" to Canada.¹²¹ Dafoe also took a leading role in criticizing the governor general's handling of the 1901 royal tour of the Duke and Duchess of York. Minto was attacked for several transgressions during the tour, and seemed to be the target for the thwarted social ambitions of those who were cut from the invitation lists when Queen Victoria's death necessitated a curtailment of lavish entertainments.¹²² Much like the Aberdeens, Minto found that his well-intentioned attempts to resolve a Canadian internal difficulty led to strained political relations, and a barrage of criticism in the press.

DIPLOMATIC AFFAIRS:

Intervening in a strictly internal matter was clearly fraught with peril for the governor general, yet opportunities often presented themselves for him to exercise his influence in external affairs. Indeed, his role encompassed a quasi-

¹²⁰ D. J. Hall, Clifford Sifton vol. 2 A Lonely Eminence, 1901 - 1929 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), 1-2, 89.

¹²¹ Manitoba Free Press, as quoted in D. J. Hall, Clifford Sifton vol. 1 The Young Napoleon, 1861 - 1900 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1981), 249.

¹²² Miller, 182-4.

diplomatic function which might be exercised to a greater or lesser degree, depending upon the circumstances and the inclinations of the incumbent. During the period in question, Britain's relationships to her imperial possessions and to other world powers was undergoing re-definition. Britain was especially eager to secure good relations with the United States. Canada looked to Britain as the guarantor of her autonomy with respect to the United States, yet could find herself in the position of a diplomatic pawn when her interests collided with a wider imperial agenda. Richard Jebb spoke for many cynical Canadians in 1905:

Canadians are bitterly conscious that their national interests, territorial and other, hitherto have been treated by England as a fund from which she can make payments at her own discretion to purchase the goodwill of the United States.¹²³

When Britain moved to resolve a number of outstanding grievances with the United States throughout the late 1890's and early 1900's, Canadians were suspicious and pessimistic. In this time of unsettled diplomatic and imperial relations, the governor general had a comparatively wide sphere for potential influence.

At times, this influence could be exercised in defence of Canadian interests, when the British government seemed to be neglectful of them. Stanley assumed this role when Britain and the United States sought to settle the issue of sealing rights on the Bering Sea. He argued the case with the British prime minister, Lord Salisbury:

As to Behring Sea we shall follow your lead though we shall grumble. I feel strongly that reasonable compensation to our sealers would be worth your while. They are ruined by an act of the Imperial Government made necessary by considerations of Imperial Policy and I do not think that we can quite accept the position laid down in your telegram of the 28th of May that it is a matter which only interests Canada and is quite

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Richard Jebb, Studies in Colonial Nationalism (London: Edward Arnold, 1905), 20.

immaterial to Great Britain. ¹²⁴

In a later dispatch, he warned Salisbury that a failure to protect Canadian interests served to strengthen the "small but noisy annexationist party." "The danger of concession," he explained,

even when it is not unreasonable in itself, is that the Canadians are always fearing that the Home Gov't will not really stand by them if it is in their interest to do otherwise. I admit the feeling is not just, but it is there all the same. ¹²⁵

Stanley observed that the Colonial Office often failed to take a sufficiently broad view of questions affecting Canada and suggested that a little more latitude was a small price to pay for Canada's continued loyalty.

Fortunately for Stanley, events did not place him in the awkward position of having to defend an imperial policy contrary to Canadian interests. Yet many key issues concerning the United States remained unresolved, and Britain was increasingly eager to secure American friendship as world alliances began to form in the opening years of the twentieth century. A Joint High Commission in 1898 - 1899 had failed to resolve the long-standing disputes over fisheries, sealing, the Alaskan boundary, trade relations, and war ships on the Great Lakes. Britain had been keenly aware of Canadian doubts about the likelihood of receiving a fair shake in such joint discussions. The bitter memory of the 1871 Washington Treaty still rankled. Chamberlain attempted to assuage these reservations by allowing the Canadians to select four of the five British delegates. Despite -- or, more probably, because of -- this fair Canadian representation, the Joint High Commission failed to agree on any

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Stanley to Salisbury, 4 June 1891, Stanley Papers.

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Stanley to Salisbury, 11 October 1891, Stanley Papers.

of the points. Canada was determined to conclude a favourable treaty, or none at all, a resolution which inclined Britain to regard her as an irritating impediment to good Anglo-American relations.¹²⁶

The governor general during this period was seen as a key figure in the British policy of promoting rapprochement with the Americans. In fact, Lord Aberdeen's relative inaction in this sphere was defended in the press by E. Castell Hopkins, who made a point of contradicting the view that the role of the governor general was to promote Anglo-American entente.¹²⁷ Minto took this duty more to heart and struggled to overcome his own surges of anti-American sentiment. He well appreciated Canadian objection to "constant Yankee bluff, and swagger" and boastings about eventual expansion. "It's all very well for people in England to romance about the sentimental love of the Anglo-Saxon Races on either side of the Atlantic but mercifully England has the ocean between her and her love," Minto observed.¹²⁸ Carman Miller has noted, however, that many of Minto's reactions centred on "disdain for the new plutocracy and the gaudy display of the nouveau riche."¹²⁹ In other words, they were based more on class than national bias. Whatever his personal feelings, Minto well understood the importance to Britain of American goodwill. In fact, the only policy he openly declared before leaving Britain was his intention to do all in his power to achieve rapprochement with the United States. He discussed this plan with his old friend, Harry White, the first secretary of the American embassy in London. His friendship with White proved

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Penlington, 129-30.

¹²⁷ Hopkins, "Lord and Lady Aberdeen," 177.

¹²⁸ Minto to Arthur Elliot, 26 February 1899, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers ed. John Saywell and Paul Stevens (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1981), vol. 1, 38.

¹²⁹ Miller, 157.

to be a springboard into the society of American politicians. He relied heavily on social visits to Washington to cement personal ties, which he saw as essential in the promotion of accord. ¹³⁰

Minto had been unable to intervene to any advantage in the discussions of the Joint High Commission which had been reaching their fruitless conclusion as he arrived in Canada to assume the viceregal post. But in the spring of 1902 he initiated another attempt at resolution of the Alaska boundary issue. Events seemed to point to a greater sense of urgency than ever. Since his visit to the Yukon, Minto's concern had been growing that American discontent there might erupt into violence, or even an attempted coup. The American public seemed, too, to be taking a more bellicose stance, and Minto worried that Roosevelt might decide to appease anti-British sentiment with an aggressive posture toward the Alaskan boundary question. Minto was also aware of a softening of Laurier's position. John Anderson of the Colonial Office had apparently been making some headway with the Canadian prime minister, and it appeared that Canada might be persuaded to abandon claims on the northern Lynn Canal. Canada's claims were considered better along the southern border near the Portland Canal. ¹³¹

Minto decided to approach Laurier directly about the matter. The prime minister agreed that something must be done and promised to speak to the American ambassador to London at his upcoming visit for Edward VII's coronation. Laurier was as good as his word and even agreed to several concessions which the Colonial Office thought were "an abject surrender to the United States." ¹³² Yet Canadian attempts at conciliation did not provoke a similarly generous response in the United States.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 157-9.

¹³¹ Ibid., 165.

¹³² Ibid., 165.

Despite an agreement to appoint three impartial jurists to the joint tribunal, Roosevelt selected three partial politicians who had openly declared their rejection of the Canadian claims. Laurier had already had difficulty convincing his cabinet of the need to acquiesce on certain points; the American attitude only made it harder. Minto was incredulous, at first refusing to believe press reports of the appointments, which described the tribunal as "made up like a backwoods jury in a murder case."¹³³ He protested to the Colonial Office, which agreed that the Americans had violated the terms of the treaty. Unfortunately, the Foreign Office was unwilling to risk this opportunity to patch things up with the Americans and warned the Canadians not to "sow the seeds of lasting ill will."¹³⁴ The Foreign Office proposed that Canada could even the score by appointing equally partisan members of the tribunal, but Minto urged otherwise. He thought Canada would gain "in the eyes of the world... by adhering to our bargain,"¹³⁵ and might even shame the Americans into better behaviour. Minto and Laurier undertook secret negotiations in Washington to try to secure a less partial body of delegates and the governor general asked the British government to hold off on ratification in the meantime. To his chagrin, the Foreign Office refused any delay for fear that Canada would scuttle the whole project. The Colonial Office was displeased but could offer Minto no encouragement. John Anderson wrote that

The thing has been badly conducted all through.... The result will be most deplorable, and it will cause more mischief in Canada than anything that has happened for years. It is no use attempting any further explanation or defence and the

¹³³ Toronto News, 2 March 1903, as quoted in Miller, 167.

¹³⁴ F. H. Villiers to Colonial Office, 25 February 1903, as quoted in Miller, 166.

¹³⁵ Minto to Michael Herbert, 27 February 1903, as quoted in Miller, 166.

sooner we get to business the better. ¹³⁶

Predictably, the final arbitration was disappointing to Canada. The three Canadian members of the tribunal felt disillusioned by the subordination of justice to considerations of international relations, and refused to sign the final award. ¹³⁷

Minto even wondered later if there had not been a deliberate attempt to undermine the relationship between Canada and Britain. He explained after the fact to George Parkin that "there was an element in the Canadian representation of the Alaska case of which I was very suspicious. I had doubts of its reliability in the service of Canada or the Empire." He declined to elaborate, promising to "explain more explicitly when I see you," ¹³⁸ but it is probable that he referred to his nemesis Clifford Sifton, who had acted as Canada's legal agent. ¹³⁹

At the time, Minto described himself as "disgusted" by the Alaska award and confided to his brother that

I am afraid it looks as if the usual wish to butter the States at home had been far too much to the front, to the detriment of the butter which might have been so much better expended on the Canadians.... Ignorance of Canada & worship of the States seems to be rampant at home! ¹⁴⁰

Nevertheless, Minto's position demanded that he defend the decision. He was especially troubled by Canadian criticism of

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John Anderson, Colonial Office minute, 7 March 1903, as quoted in Miller, 167.

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Miller, 169.

¹³⁸ Minto to George Parkin, 26 September 1904, as quoted in Underhill, 126.

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Underhill, 126.

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Minto to Arthur Elliot, 18 October 1903, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 2, 350.

Chief Justice Lord Alverstone, the sole English delegate. When the Colonial Office rejected Minto's proposal to have a public defence of the decision, Minto wrote to Alverstone directly, seeking an explanation which would reassure Canadians. Unfortunately, Alverstone's reply only lent credence to accusations of partiality. Minto reacted indignantly, rebuking Alverstone for a decision which "cannot be supported on judicial grounds." The award was "an injustice to Canada which nothing in the case can justify and no language can explain."¹⁴¹ Minto's ardent imperialism did not prevent him from recognizing that Canadian interests had suffered because of Britain's desire to keep peace with the United States. Perhaps his later attempt to implicate one of his Canadian ministers in the deal-making was his way of rationalizing the treaty while still remaining enthusiastic about the benefits of empire.

Minto's bitter experience notwithstanding, his successor decided to take an active role in outstanding issues involving the United States. Grey put good relations with the Americans high on his list of objectives when assuming the viceregal post in 1904. There were still a number of outstanding issues to be settled, but the absence of any immediate crisis seemed to Grey to present a good opportunity for smoothing out diplomatic relations. He began work immediately to establish close ties with Elihu Root when the latter became American Secretary of State in July 1905. Peter Neary observes that Grey stretched the diplomatic aspects of his role to the limit in his quest to gain American friendship.

Of a restless and interfering nature, Grey ... was eventually to press his powers as governor general almost to the breaking point. He was constitutionally incapable of playing the role of figurehead and his frequent initiatives often led to uneasy relations with the cautious and politically sensitive

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Minto to Alverstone, 22 December 1903, as quoted in Miller, 170.

Laurier.¹⁴²

In a manner that seems typical of Grey, he tended to exaggerate the impact of his overtures to the Americans. In March 1906 Grey made an official visit to the United States and spoke to the Pilgrims' Club of New York, an organization devoted to improved Anglo-American relations. On this occasion, Grey made the magnanimous gesture of returning to the American people a portrait of Benjamin Franklin "acquired" by his family during the American Revolution. His warm reception and the general atmosphere of goodwill led him to optimistically assert that all unresolved issues could be settled by July.¹⁴³ Grey clearly failed to grasp the complexity of the issues involved. While friendly relations were an important prerequisite to any substantial agreement, there was much to be worked out before a formal treaty could be arranged.

Grey's role in working toward Anglo-American rapprochement seems to have centred primarily on initiating social contacts, and pressuring the Canadian ministers into action. When talks bogged down in January 1907, Grey convinced Root to visit Ottawa for informal talks with Laurier. This visit was considered a public relations success, but did not issue in any concrete agreements.¹⁴⁴ With the arrival of the determined James Bryce in Washington as British ambassador, Grey's direct diplomatic role began to recede. Now, working in tandem with the new ambassador, Grey concentrated on exerting pressure on the Canadian side. By the end of 1907, a Joint Commission which

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Peter Neary, "Grey, Bryce and the Settlement of Canadian-American Differences, 1905 - 1911," Canadian Historical Review 49 (December 1968): 358.

143

Hallett, 218-22.

144

Neary, 363.

Bryce formed had begun to make progress on the question of boundary waters. But he was exasperated by Canadian slowness to formalize agreements which had been negotiated. "The Canadians," Bryce complained to the foreign secretary, are quite heartbreaking in their habit of procrastination and delay As soon as I left Ottawa they fell back into the old rut and since then not a word have I been able to get from them enabling me to go to Root with official sanction for the settlements to which they informally agreed.¹⁴⁵ He kept up a steady stream of letters to the governor general, urging him to keep the pressure on Laurier, and at last an agreement was reached on the boundary waters issue in April 1908.

It is true that Laurier's stubborn resistance to any rushed agreement was frustrating to Grey and the imperial government as a whole, yet Grey found much to admire in Laurier's firmness. In a fashion which typified the viceregal role, Grey exerted imperial pressure on the prime minister and, in turn, represented the dominion's position to the British. He agreed, with Laurier, for example, that Root's difficulties in getting a treaty through the United States Senate should not figure into Canada's policies, and should not be grounds for accepting an inferior treaty. Grey praised Laurier's stubbornness in a despatch to his chief at the Colonial Office:

It is impossible to deny that the direct outspoken and rather choleric manner of our Canadian Amateur Diplomat has been more successful than the deferential attitude towards Root of the British Ambassador.¹⁴⁶

The Boundary Waters Treaty, which was ratified early in 1909, has now been recognized as an important milestone in the achievement of Canadian sovereignty insofar as it allowed for a

¹⁴⁵ James Bryce to Sir Edward Grey, 6 March 1908, as quoted in Neary, 371.

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Grey to Creve, 11 January 1909, as quoted in Hallett, 233.

permanent Canadian - American commission which would operate without reference to the British government.¹⁴⁷ The next step toward Canadian diplomatic autonomy -- the establishment of a separate Department of External Affairs -- would involve Grey quite directly.

The governor general had often been referred to as a kind of "imperial postman." All correspondence between Canada and Britain, or any foreign country, would normally pass through the Colonial Office to the governor general, or vice versa. The governor general would in turn communicate with the Canadian privy council or an individual minister. Even correspondence between the American and Canadian governments would have to travel this circuitous route, twice across the Atlantic, to reach its destination. In addition to this cumbersome method of communication, there was the inadequacy of procedures in place in Canada to deal with external affairs. There was no responsible minister or department of the civil service devoted to foreign affairs. No comprehensive system of record keeping existed with respect to external matters, so that it was often difficult to have ready access to materials needed to make an informed decision.¹⁴⁸ Grey's experience with negotiations involving the United States convinced him of the need for a better system. He found Laurier's slowness and apparent forgetfulness exasperating when the situation seemed to call for decisive action. In a letter to Crewe at the Colonial Office, Grey poured out his frustration:

On the several occasions on which I have pressed Sir Wilfrid for replies the courteous old Procrastinator makes a note in a memorandum book, which after careful entry therein of the points calling for immediate attention, he is in the habit of

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Hallett, 234.

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G. P. deT. Glazebrook, A History of Canadian External Relations vol. 1 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1966), 201-2.

closing with a solemn pursing of the lips, and with an intimation that Minutes dealing with the questions referred to shall be forthwith deposited in My Excellency's hands, and having parried my importunity with this assurance the matter is allowed to rest until I again remind him that H.M. government are still waiting for replies to the despatches, when the pursing of the lips and the entry in the note book followed by the same assurances are again repeated. ¹⁴⁹

Grey believed that a separate department devoted to external affairs would relieve the prime minister of some of his burden, but also ensure that matters were dealt with in reasonable time. This idea had been considered before, notably in 1907 by Joseph Pope, undersecretary of State, during the Royal Commission on the civil service. ¹⁵⁰ Now, Grey, with the help of Ambassador Bryce, launched a campaign to see it implemented. They met with success in March 1909 when Laurier introduced a bill to establish a Department of External Affairs, presided over by the secretary of state. ¹⁵¹ The bill passed with little debate, or apparent notice of its significance with respect to the imperial relationship. The government emphasized that no substantial change was intended, and that it was a matter only of internal reorganization, an assessment that was not challenged in the House. ¹⁵² Yet Grey, who had been so keen to make the change was somewhat alarmed by what the bill seemed to suggest. It stated that the new department would "have conduct of all official communications between the government of Canada and the government of any other country in connection with the external affairs of Canada." ¹⁵³ Grey disliked the term "conduct" and

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Grey to Crewe, 17 August 1908, as quoted in Hallett, 251.

¹⁵⁰ Glazebrook, 202.

¹⁵¹ Hallett, 251-2.

¹⁵² Glazebrook, 203.

¹⁵³

Hallett, 252.

pointed out that the bill, as it stood, did in fact represent a significant change from existing arrangements. Laurier promised to amend the bill but neglected to do so and Grey was unwilling to risk the drastic step of disallowing it, although he feared its impact on his own authority. Charles Murphy, secretary of state, had argued that the changes Grey advocated would reduce the new department to a mere filing department, which is essentially what Grey had in mind. Grey betrayed his anxiety to Bryce, asking that he not be by-passed in correspondence. "With a view of preventing the office of the Governor General drifting into a subordinate and undignified position," he pleaded, "I must ask you to send me ... copies of any private communications." ¹⁵⁴ He was concerned also that he have access to the new department, and suggested that the office be situated in the east block of Parliament near his own. To his horror, when he returned from a northern tour he discovered that it had been located over a barber shop on Bank Street. Grey noted with disgust that it might as well be in Calcutta. ¹⁵⁵

Grey's agitation for a measure which had the potential to enhance Canadian autonomy, even at the expense of his own viceregal authority, has to be seen in its proper context. His vision of a separate external affairs department for Canada was not meant to promote independence from the empire, but was only part of a wider scheme for improved imperial organization. He also urged the creation of a new imperial minister in Britain to deal solely with the self-governing empire, housed separately in a Dominion House. ¹⁵⁶ This would presumably ensure that imperial affairs affecting the dominions would receive adequate attention

¹⁵⁴ Grey to Bryce, 2 June 1909, as quoted in Hallett, 253.

¹⁵⁵ Hallett, 254.

¹⁵⁶

John Edward Kendle, The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887 - 1911: A Study in Imperial Organization (London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1967), 129.

in Britain's crowded agenda. Laurier had earlier, at the Imperial Conference of 1907, rejected a proposal to establish an Imperial Secretariat within the Colonial Office to deal with issues arising from the conferences. The Canadian prime minister feared that such a body would be inclined to act too independently.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, he seemed amenable to Grey's proposal and admitted to the governor general that it might be wise to create a separate department under a responsible minister to deal with dominion affairs. While this acknowledgment gave Grey hope, Laurier's habit of delay impeded the plan. Grey maintained that the initiative should come from Laurier himself but the objections of the minister of finance, William Fielding gave the prime minister pause. He was unwilling to make such a proposal without the complete support of his cabinet. Grey's intercessions with Fielding were fruitless and he marvelled that he found himself in the position of "an Imperialist Governor-General engaged in an endeavour to plant in His Majesty's Canadian Minister of Finance a proper respect for the dignity and status of Canadian Nationality."¹⁵⁸ To Grey, the enhancement of the imperial tie through a more efficient administrative structure carried with it an acknowledgment of Canada's status in the empire -- the very thing which he believed defined her nationhood.

Thus, events during this period granted the governors general numerous opportunities to exercise influence in political and diplomatic matters. The decision to become involved depended upon circumstances and the inclinations of the individual governor general. His direct constitutional role in Canada was most often dormant, and the decision as to how far to exercise reserve powers was bound to be controversial. In internal political controversies where the governor general had no clear

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 103.

¹⁵⁸ Grey, as quoted in Kendle, 131.

constitutional role, it was often tempting to step in to help to resolve difficulties. Yet these internal conflicts could be a potential minefield for a well-intentioned governor general. Regardless of how successful his interference proved to be in settling a dispute, he was, after all, a member of Britain's nobility and a symbol of imperial control. His contribution was often unwelcome because it seemed to betoken a subordinate, colonial status for Canada. In diplomatic affairs, too, he was forced to tread carefully. As an on-the-spot representative of the British government, it was expected that the governor general would quietly work toward the achievement of imperial diplomatic goals. He knew, on the other hand, that he would be associated with whatever action was taken, and took pains when necessary to educate his home government about conditions in Canada which might influence diplomatic decisions. Yet, for all that, he was powerless to control the final outcome and had to be prepared to defend unpopular decisions in Canada. At times this made it difficult to generate Canadian enthusiasm for empire. To some, it seemed that imperialism inevitably conflicted with Canada's interests. The governor general sought to prove otherwise -- that the best route to dignified nationhood lay in membership in the British empire.

CHAPTER 3

The governor general has long assumed a leading role in social and cultural matters. These spheres afforded numerous opportunities for the promotion of Canadianism and the British imperial tie. The governor general's social position was paramount in the capital; he and his wife set the tone for Ottawa society. The transfer of British social conventions to Canada was criticized by many, but the presence of the British viceregal couple in Ottawa gave a human face to the imperial relationship. Most of the governors general did not limit themselves to mingling in the company of the Ottawa elite. They cast a wider net by travelling to other parts of the country, encouraging the values that they believed would enhance Canada's development within the imperial family. They sought, too, to promote a spirit of ethnic rapprochement in Canada. Any social opportunity to mitigate divisions between French- and English-Canadians was exploited. While they exercised social leadership through travel, speeches, and the like, the viceregal couple also dedicated themselves to specific projects which were meant to enhance the lives of the lower orders, and provide a model for the more advantaged. As British aristocrats, they abhorred the corrupting influence of American materialism and sought to promote a sense of noblesse oblige among Canada's plutocracy. Here the governors general and their wives led primarily by example. Each left a legacy of public and private acts of charity.

In cultural matters, too, the governors general sought to provide leadership. Each worked to encourage schemes that would promote interest in Canadian sports, art, literature and history. These were considered the hallmarks of a civilized society on the British model. They were also key components in the spirit of Canadian patriotism and ethnic unity the governors general hoped to foster.

SOCIAL ROLE:

The governor general's role in Ottawa society was one which had evolved gradually. Lord and Lady Monck, who occupied Rideau Hall at the time of Confederation, were known to take a very low-key approach to the social aspects to their position. Monck apparently turned up for the Confederation ceremony in his street clothes.¹ The Earl of Dufferin, who assumed the viceregal post in 1872, is generally credited with setting a new, higher tone for his successors. Sandra Gwyn notes that Lord and Lady Dufferin did not so much "embroider... upon the office of the Governor-General as reinvent ...it."² The governor general and his wife became Ottawa's acknowledged social arbiters.³ The Dufferins expanded Rideau Hall, adding a ballroom with stage, and a "Tent Room," which combined a supper room with an indoor tennis court and could accommodate fifteen hundred guests. An increased formality in viceregal functions coincided with a grander scale for these entertainments. Many more aspirants to Ottawa society could be included. Lady Dufferin established a precedent with a punishing social schedule, including luncheons, teas, concerts, receptions, dinners, theatrical evenings, costume balls, and weekly garden or skating parties.⁴

This precedent put considerable strain on the energies -- not to mention the finances -- of those who assumed the office later. In a 1907 article, "Vicereines of Canada," H. V. Ross

¹ Gwyn, 159.

² Ibid., 144.

³ Ibid., 145-57.

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R. H. Hubbard, "Viceregal Influences on Canadian Society," in The Shield of Achilles: Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age, ed. W. L. Morton (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1968), 260.

stresses that "clever, tactful and winsome wives" were a prerequisite for the men selected as governors general. "So many high traditions have clustered around Government House at Ottawa that it now requires a woman of more than ordinary endowments to live up to them."⁵ It is clear that many felt the strain of the crushing burden of official duties. Lady Grey and her elder daughter were known to have retiring dispositions and often felt uncomfortable with the demands of society. The Grey's younger daughter, Lady Evelyn, fortunately shared her father's extroversion and was able to assume some of the burden.⁶

Lady Aberdeen is known for her high-profile, and seemingly inexhaustible energy in fulfilling her duties, yet there is evidence that she, too, experienced difficulties. Her daughter and biographer notes that Lady Aberdeen had rebelled against that very sort of "flummery" and social convention in her youth and regretted the lack of personal freedom her position extracted. When her husband accepted the position of lord lieutenant in Ireland before his Canadian term, Lady Aberdeen likened their status to that of "state prisoners."⁷ While in Canada she privately railed against the "stifling official artificiality" and the "perpetual smirk" she had to wear.⁸ During an official tour she confided to her journal that she felt herself on the edge of coming unglued:

We live our days to the tune of 'God Save the Queen,' from the moment the train stops till it departs, & one sometimes wonders inwardly whether the moment will not arrive when instead of keeping up an inane smile, we will not seize someone & turn them round & shake them or do something

⁵ H. V. Ross, "Vicereines of Canada," The Canadian Magazine 29 (July 1907): 225.

⁶ Hallett, 76.

⁷ Pentland, 56.

⁸ Ibid., 110.

desperate.⁹

It is perhaps not surprising that the Aberdeens liked to escape to their British Columbia ranch. Here, Lady Aberdeen explains, "we feel as if we had regained our individuality which was fast being worn away as we became machines for receiving addresses and visiting institutions."¹⁰

When the Aberdeens assumed the viceregal post they were given detailed instructions on Canadian 'protocol' and the sort of entertainments that they would be required to host. Regular skating parties for "several hundred people" were expected. The Aberdeens were warned about uninvited people trying to crash these parties since they were held outdoors when it was dark. Invitation lists were always a problem, they were advised, since "there is no social distinction. Society is made up of officials, & those whom circumstances or accident have brought to the front and who have the necessary personal qualifications." The enlargement of families created further difficulty, and "new candidates for invitations to Government House are continually coming forward & in most cases their inclusion is unavoidable."¹¹ The Aberdeens were warned that the admission of new members into the circle of Rideau Hall functions should be made only with great care and due consideration. Of course, this spirit of exclusiveness was dictated largely by budgetary limitations.

Although by British standards, Canadian society was characterized by a lack of rigidity, some observers in Canada were concerned that Rideau Hall was the means through which artificial social distinctions would be imported into Canada.

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Lady Aberdeen, 26 September 1896, The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, 365.

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Pentland, 115.

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Aberdeen papers, National Archives of Canada.

Goldwin Smith was especially vocal in his criticism of the importation of restrictive British social conventions. He saw Government House as the source of much of this unwholesome influence. He had a particularly strong objection to the governor general's distribution of imperial honours and titles to Canadians. "The medieval and military title of knight is grotesquely out of place in a modern and commercial community," he charged. Further, the fact that titles of honour were bestowed from Britain undermined Canada's dignity. These titles, Smith complained, "not only intoxicate, but estrange. Canada certainly suffers in the estrangement of her leading men from their looking to a fountain of honour elsewhere."¹² He further condemned the establishment of a "petty court" in Ottawa and the extravagant claims of Canadian patriotism of successive governors general. "The affectation of Loyalty is ridiculous," he scoffed, pointing out that the men were not long enough in office to properly know the country. Smith enjoyed a chuckle at the expense of Dufferin, who was reported to have sent his gushing speeches to the press before they were delivered marked "applause" at appropriate intervals.¹³ Goldwin Smith was not alone in his criticism of the office of the governor general.¹⁴ Another expressed his fear that "old world evils, inimical to the welfare of our people" were infiltrating the country through the viceregal office. This was not only "harmless snobbery." Social distinctions, he warned, tended over time to harden into

¹² Goldwin Smith, Reminiscences ed. Arnold Haultain (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 428.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 458.

¹⁴ Lady Aberdeen found it ironic that Goldwin Smith displayed impeccable form when he was host to the viceregal couple. She marvelled that Smith, who had long attacked the office, "should also be the man to receive us in the most absolutely royal manner, every point of etiquette being most formally observed.... It was all very funny." (Lady Aberdeen, as quoted in R. H. Hubbard, Rideau Hall, 88.)

distinct class stratification.¹⁵

The progressive Lady Aberdeen attempted to thwart this tendency and took a more democratic approach to Rideau Hall invitations. This prospect disturbed many of the "better sort" of people. One complained that many of the thousand guests at one reception acted as if they had not eaten in weeks.¹⁶ Lord Aberdeen's proposal to have Ottawa's tram lines extended as far as Government House, to enable more people to come, had to be abandoned amidst a storm of protest led by Ottawa's cabmen.¹⁷ With Minto's succession to the viceregal office there was a more rigid adherence to established codes of protocol. In many ways, Minto's term took on a reactionary tone. Minto resolved that only those persons entitled to official recognition should be invited to Government House.¹⁸ Not surprisingly, this retreat from democratic ideals annoyed those who had previously won acceptance into Ottawa society. Minto had little interest in the mass entertainments the Aberdeens had undertaken. He further provoked disappointment with his decision to abandon the costly practice of holding periodic regional courts in Halifax and Victoria.¹⁹ The governor general's military secretary, Major F. N. Maude, oversaw many of the fine points of protocol when Minto travelled. Maude has been described as a "meticulous perfectionist"²⁰ and attracted criticism in the press for his predilection for "polishing our manners."²¹ If Minto's

¹⁵ Lighthall, 373.

¹⁶ Gwyn, 286.

¹⁷ Kirk-Greene, "Governors-General," 40.

¹⁸ Hubbard, "Viceregal Influences," 270.

¹⁹ Miller, 55.

²⁰ Ibid., 57.

²¹ Montreal Sunday Sun, 20 November 1904, as quoted in Miller,

perceived rigidity and aloofness attracted criticism, Lady Minto escaped the frequent barbs that dogged her predecessor. Of course, Lady Minto's accomplishments were not the sort that would provoke controversy. Rather, she won praise for her grace in waltzing and beautiful style of dress.²² Unlike Lady Aberdeen, Lady Minto was quite cautious and reserved in her official duties. She had been warned by the queen herself not to lend her name to any new venture which might be criticized. Queen Victoria reminded Lady Minto that "Your own dear father [once the queen's private secretary] advised me to make this rule nearly forty years ago and I have never deviated from it."

²³ No doubt the storm of protest over Lady Aberdeen's intrusive efforts to achieve social reform were fresh in everyone's mind.

While the Aberdeens were considered quite progressive in their attitudes, they were clearly conscious of their rank in society, and the opportunities for leadership it afforded. They represented a blend of new liberal ideas with an adherence to the traditions of public service demanded by their noble status. John Saywell notes that Lady Aberdeen "was that peculiar combination of a democrat-aristocrat," but also allows that she has been called an "autocrat-democrat."²⁴ Lady Aberdeen appears to have taken a rather regal posture in public appearances. She led the procession into the ballroom for the Aberdeen's first state dinner, resplendent in blue satin, beryls, and a star tiara, with her young sons in full dress kilts carrying her train.²⁵ Sandra Gwyn wryly notes that "Lady Aberdeen, for all her populist principles, was given to parading about like an

²² Miller, 22.

²³ Queen Victoria, as quoted in Hubbard, "Viceregal Influences," 93.

²⁴ Saywell, "Introduction," The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, xxv.

²⁵

Hubbard, Rideau Hall, 78.

absolute monarch."²⁶ Her efforts to elevate the general social tone sometimes raised the hackles of those she sought to "help."

Veronica Strong-Boag explains that, by 1893,

the Dominion had emerged as a more self-conscious society than it had been in the days of Dufferin and Lorne -- a society suspicious of any sign of imperial condescension.

Unfortunately, Lady Aberdeen, with her enthusiasms and her friendships with great men, was just the woman to aggravate the Canadian elite's sense of inferiority. The comparison of her diaries with those of an earlier viceregal lady, the Marquise of Dufferin, suggests how great a difference could exist between an evangelical Victorian liberal and a socially indifferent aristocrat.²⁷

Lady Aberdeen's earnest drive for general social and moral improvement strained the bounds of the viceregal role. She is widely considered to be the dominant partner of the two; some critics liked to call her the "Governess-General." Anthony Kirk-Greene labelled Lady Aberdeen "an insensitive do-gooder."²⁸ The duties of the governor general and his wife were undefined to such a great extent that it was generally impossible to determine what their role was. Unfortunately, everyone was quick to criticize when these invisible bounds had been exceeded.

The Aberdeens began their reforming efforts in their own household, and established the "Haddo House Club" for their servants. This gave the staff access to activities geared toward their improvement. They could take classes in French, history, art, carving, or singing. The moral conduct of the staff was also a source of concern. The viceregal couple built a small wooden chapel and expressed the wish that all members of

²⁶ Gwyn, 286.

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Veronica Strong-Boag, The Parliament of Women (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1976), 139.

²⁸

Kirk-Greene, "Governors-General," 51.

the household should attend regular services. "They seem to have had little choice in the matter," R. H. Hubbard writes.²⁹ Yet critics condemned the Aberdeens' "socialistic" treatment of their servants. Minto had little admiration for his predecessors' household organization, and blamed the Aberdeens' rumoured equal treatment of servants for what he saw as slipshod conditions. When he took up residence in Rideau Hall, Minto sent a gossipy letter home to his brother, describing the prevailing attitude toward Aberdeen as "respectful contempt." "His establishment was too awful," he continued,

punctuality for anything quite unknown -- dinner sometimes not till 10. p.m., his A.D.C.'s starving and picking up what they could. ...The Haddo Club (on terms of equality with the servants every Thursday night) when subjects were brought forward for discussion, in which I hear on one occasion the butler considerably bested H.E. The servants consequently odious to everyone.³⁰

The Aberdeens were well aware of the whisperings about their "democratic" household. The Aberdeen papers contain a clipping from an unnamed Ottawa paper which reported a "wild fluttering of skirts on account of the refusal of Their Excellencies to attend the Ball on New Year's Eve." The rumour was that the Aberdeens were giving their servants a dance on that night. "The 'help' seem to run things pretty much their own way at Rideau Hall," the reporter concluded.³¹

Of course, the Aberdeen's ambitions for reform extended far beyond their own household. Lady Aberdeen was particularly quick to see the opportunities her position granted her to make progress toward general social improvement. She continued a

²⁹ Hubbard, Rideau Hall, 78.

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Minto to Arthur Elliot, 25 December 1898, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers vol. 2, 24.

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Aberdeen papers.

variety of schemes she had begun in Britain. Minto, who claimed to have no use for "goody, goody, benevolent people,"³² predictably derided her efforts: "she went in for everything she could think of and invented other things to go in for."³³ Lady Aberdeen continued the publication of an inspirational magazine called Onward and Upward, which she had begun for the benefit of farm servant girls on their estates. Lady Aberdeen was a firm believer in the positive influence of women in effecting changes in society. Like so many early feminists, she maintained that women could help to elevate the general tone of life, promote temperance and serve as a civilizing influence. The May Court Club she formed for prominent girls in Ottawa society was part of this movement. She was impressed by the example of Whitelands, a training college for teachers, which had taken up Ruskin's idea of choosing a May queen, a young woman who stood out not merely because of physical beauty but because of fine character and leadership. Lady Aberdeen described the motives for adopting this plan in her memoirs:

We wished if possible to start some plan which would make the girls of Ottawa realise their special responsibility in shaping the tone of social life in the Capital, and which must therefore make itself felt throughout the Dominion, and we wanted them to consider what they could do amongst themselves, girls amongst girls, to train themselves for the future, and to undertake certain definite plans which would sweeten life for the whole community.³⁴

The girls busied themselves with a variety of charitable schemes, including relief of the poor and hospital benefits, under the direction of Lady Aberdeen the club's patron and

³² Gwyn, 298.

³³ Minto, as quoted in Kirk-Greene, "Governors-General," 52.

³⁴

Lady Aberdeen, We Twa: Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen (London: W. Collins, 1925), 60.

"grandmother." ³⁵ Lady Aberdeen's social efforts among Canada's plutocracy took other forms as well. She was already president of the International Council of Women and became the first president of the National Council of Women in Canada, which was formed in October 1893. This organization strove to "best conserve the highest good of the Family and the State, to hereby band ourselves together to further the application of the Golden Rule to society, custom and law." ³⁶ Lady Aberdeen won praise from some quarters for her advocacy of a proper role for Canada's women. H. V. Ross praised her cultivation of "the home life which, to her mind, is the sphere in which God and Nature intended woman most to shine." ³⁷ Ironically, Lady Aberdeen was condemned by others for behaviour that was considered overly progressive and unfeminine. To some, the spectacle of a woman speaking from a public platform was unseemly, no matter what her message. Saturday Night denounced Lady Aberdeen's "petticoat rule," explaining that in Canada "we only expect to find one pair of trousers in each family." ³⁸ Apparently even those who might have supported the sentiments Lady Aberdeen espoused found her very advocacy of them inappropriate.

Like other occupants of Rideau Hall, Lord and Lady Aberdeen travelled widely. It had become an established viceregal tradition to travel to further reaches of the country, working to enhance Canada's national life and commitment to the empire. Dufferin established the precedent of extended viceregal tours. His successors continued this, even when conditions made it difficult. Both Lorne and Lansdowne resorted to horseback

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Ibid., 65.

³⁶ Ibid., 99.

³⁷ Ross, 230.

³⁸ Saturday Night, 6 May 1896, as quoted in Strong-Boag, 141.

travel for extensive portions of their western tours.³⁹ By Stanley's term of office, travel had been made a little easier. He had use of a special railway carriage, Victoria, expressly for his trans-Canada travels.⁴⁰ Of course, even given improvements in transportation, lengthy tours were bound to be tiring. Stanley kept a journal during his three-month trip to the Pacific coast in the autumn of 1889 which provides a glimpse of the exhaustion and stress of such a tour. The list of scheduled events was daunting indeed, and since a viceregal tour was a rare event, the governor general could not lightly decide to pass over any small town en route. He found himself the quarry of every socially prominent hostess and confided to his journal on one occasion that he was "bored to death" by the vacuous chatter he had to endure.⁴¹ Stanley found relief from the stuffiness of his duties in climbing aboard the cowcatcher while his train sped along. The experience, this distinguished British peer recorded, was "quite delightful. More like flying than anything else."⁴²

John Saywell has suggested that Lady Aberdeen saw touring as a means of spreading enthusiasm for the National Council of Women, the Victorian Order of Nurses and her other projects. "Indeed," he remarks, "these were often the major reasons for the journey." Her journal frequently records the progress she seemed to be making in the establishment of new local National Council of Women branches in her wake. With few exceptions, Lady Aberdeen appears to have endured the trials of travelling in state with outward good humour. Her equilibrium was not

³⁹ John Cowan, Canada's Governors-General. Lord Monck to General Vanier (Toronto: York, 1965), 33-46.

⁴⁰ Hubbard, "Viceregal Influences," 267.

⁴¹ Journal of 1889 western tour, 3 November 1889, Stanley Papers.

⁴² Ibid.

upset when the viceregal party found themselves housed over top a noisy all-night bar in New Westminster.⁴³ She seemed genuinely moved by the many expressions of affection they received.

It might be expected that Minto, with his distaste for mass entertainments, might have been a reluctant traveller. On the contrary, Minto logged the most extensive viceregal tour yet in 1900, travelling more than 10,000 miles in eight weeks.⁴⁴ All in all, he covered over 113,000 miles during his term of office. Carman Miller finds that Minto, who often seemed excessively stiff and formal in Ottawa, displayed a common touch when reaching out to Canadians outside the charmed circle of the Capital's elite:

On tour he might forbid the formal banquet with its interminable toasts, but he rarely missed the opportunity to solicit the opinions of his audience. He was convinced that rulers and their deputies had an obligation to learn the minds of their people. He also went out of his way to meet and talk to those who possessed no official claim to recognition. Although in the presence of pompous politicians and bureaucrats, Minto seemed often to stand on his fragile sense of viceregal dignity; he never hesitated to espouse the cause of the small man or the neglected minority.⁴⁵

Perhaps it is not surprising that Minto, the doer rather than the thinker, should enjoy being on tour, away from the company of politicians and paper shufflers. Miller relates an instance when Minto got off his train in Brandon, Manitoba to help retrieve victims from a train wreck.⁴⁶

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Lady Aberdeen, 11 October 1895, The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, 285.

44 Kirk-Greene, "Governors-General," 40.

45

Miller, 194-5.

46

Ibid., 195.

The following year, Minto accompanied the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (later King George V and Queen Mary) when they made a Canadian tour. Two new railway cars, the Cornwall and York were built for the occasion. Minto found the 1901 coast-to-coast tour to be "a triumphant display of loyal sentiment."⁴⁷ Among other varied entertainments, the royal couple were treated to a hair-raising ride down the timber slide at Chaudiere, followed by a pork and beans luncheon given by lumbermen in the Rockcliffe woods.⁴⁸ Each town outdid itself in trying to provide a characteristic entertainment for visiting viceroys. The governor general and his party were compelled to admire cunning structures constructed of wheat sheaves, endless ethnic dances and songs, displays of local industries, and the like.

Most of the governors general kept up an appearance of interest during these scheduled amusements. Few however could rival Grey's ardent enthusiasm. Noted for his "fulsome oratory,"⁴⁹ Grey had copious praise for every corner of the country. He referred to Hamilton as the "Table Mountain [with] its Bay of Naples," and the Toronto lake shore as "that beautiful Mediterranean Sea."⁵⁰ Grey also rather extravagantly described the Hudson Bay as "the Mediterranean of Canada," leading Prime Minister Borden to conclude that Grey's "enthusiasm outran his judgment."⁵¹ Generally, though, Grey's torrents of flattery met with little criticism. Local residents were usually delighted to hear lavish praise of their city and its worthy inhabitants. This seemed only to prime them to

⁴⁷ Minto, as quoted in Hubbard, Rideau Hall, 106.

⁴⁸ Hubbard, Rideau Hall, 103.

⁴⁹ Hubbard, "Viceregal Influences," 272.

⁵⁰ Hubbard, Rideau Hall, 111.

⁵¹ Robert Laird Borden, Robert Laird Borden: His Memoirs (Toronto: Macmillan, 1938) vol. 1, 73.

embrace Grey's imperial homilies, which inevitably followed. Perhaps they were flattered to have an imperial statesman of Grey's stature express his need for their help in spreading the imperial gospel. An unnamed Canadian lady marvelled at the effect of Grey's oration on the Canadian people:

Every speech he made, whether before important bodies of men, to University students, or to gatherings of children in convent or schoolhouse, pointed in the same way to the Imperial cause that lay at their doors waiting for their help to bring it nearer its goal. The warmth of his voice, its wonderfully vibrating quality had a very moving effect. For instance, I remember being struck by a hardened politician, of the real manipulator type, a narrow, selfish, anti-Imperialist, saying to me, "I had never heard any one give the toast of His Majesty in a way that made me think what it meant, or feel the least tremor of emotion, until I heard His Excellency say, 'The King!' The rich tone of his voice made me feel the loyalty that was filling his heart, and it made it very affecting to drink the King's health with him." ⁵²

An imperial evangelist par excellence, Grey welcomed the opportunity to travel Canada and spread the message. His only complaint was that his salary as governor general did not nearly cover his expenses, and the drain on his resources was most severe when he travelled. He calculated that he spent \$ 20,000. per year over the allotted salary. ⁵³

Travel was by no means the only strain on the budgets of successive governors general. Each was associated with a variety of charitable causes and was expected to exhibit the kind of noblesse oblige that would be an example to Canada's privileged class. Some of these acts of charity were public and conspicuous, meant to inspire others to similar magnanimity. But others were quiet and covert, evidence of a true sense of personal obligation.

It seems to be the much-criticized Aberdeens who led their

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A Canadian lady, as quoted in Begbie, 125.

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Hubbard, Rideau Hall, 111.

counterparts in this regard. The Aberdeen papers are crowded with appeals for charity from every quarter. It is impossible to peruse these documents without a rising sense of sympathy for the viceregal couple. The barrage of appeals ranges from the heart-rending to the trivial. A desperate farmer pleads with the governor general to intervene in a property dispute which has cost him his farm. A tailor requests a loan of five hundred dollars to learn the cutting trade and buy shears. A man who has lost both hands and feet appeals for fifteen dollars to buy artificial hands. A fourteen-year-old requests postage stamps for his collection. A labourer seeks a situation on the Aberdeen fruit farm in British Columbia. One petitioner appeals to Aberdeen's national background in a request for aid to a Scottish-Canadian widow whose home has burned down. St. Mary's church in Winnipeg sends some apparently unsolicited tickets and asks the governor general's help in their campaign to raise funds for their school. "If your means do not permit you to accept all the tickets that are enclosed, kindly appeal to your friends on our behalf," the letter instructs.⁵⁴ A survey of these countless appeals even brought to light a humble supplication from one of the writer's own ancestors, who expressed his gratitude at Aberdeen's gift of five pounds, which was to assist him until he recovered from an accident. It is improbable that the Aberdeens were able to assist everyone who appealed to them for help, but there is evidence that they did extend aid to many. On the most immediate level, it is clear that the Aberdeens practised the charity that they preached.

The viceregal couple's sense of social responsibility would not permit them to remain aloof from the interests of the people they served. This active kind of charity was but one way in which the Aberdeens sought to identify themselves with the well-being of the Canadian people. An observer in Victoria praised this tendency, which he felt had been lacking in some degree in

⁵⁴ Aberdeen papers, Reel 5.

Aberdeen's predecessors. He criticized Stanley's failure to draw together the home country and the dominion, but this was

Not so with Aberdeen possessing in his wife a comrade heart to heart with him in all his earnest efforts; identifying himself, as he has done with Canada and our own British Columbia in his investments -- investments which we all know were started amidst many obstacles, and in surmounting which, in the plucky and practical way he did, he has shown the purpose of the man. A Scot by birth, an Irishmen [sic] in the new light he has thrown on Ireland's rights, and an Englishman in his contempt for the 'Little Englander,' he is now a Canadian in all but birth.⁵⁵

As laudable as these private acts of charity were, the governors general were able to make a greater impact with public demonstrations of munificence. In this way they hoped to encourage the Canadian plutocracy to echo the supposed role of the British aristocracy. An elite class, imbued with the spirit of disinterested service, was a vital component missing from Canadian society which the governors general sought to foster.

The viceregal wives often worked along side their husbands in this endeavour. They lent their support to a variety of polite causes which did not attract undue controversy, but occasionally stumbled upon a political minefield. Then, as now, charities involving medical care seemed to be especially popular. Lady Stanley established the Lady Stanley Institute for Trained Nurses in Ottawa. Minto founded the first anti-tuberculosis association in Canada, which was devoted to public health education and the establishment of improved sanatoriums. Lady Minto established a series of cottage hospitals. Lady Aberdeen's varied crusades included prison reform, the establishment of a maternity hospital in Ottawa, and the Victorian Order of Nurses. The latter organization was founded by Lady Aberdeen in honour of its namesake's Diamond Jubilee, and proved to provide one more target for Lady Aberdeen's

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"Allez allez," letter to the editor, Victoria Province, 21 December 1895, Aberdeen papers.

numerous critics. The scheme prompted an outcry among Canadian physicians, led, it has been suggested, by the thwarted Sir Charles Tupper. The venom of the press was such that the V.O.N. Committee begged Lady Aberdeen to give up her involvement in the project, since it was unfitting for a governor's wife to receive such abuse.⁵⁶ Lady Aberdeen at last triumphed over her detractors by soliciting the support of Doctor Alfred Worcester of Harvard, who shamed an assembled group of Toronto doctors by insinuating that their resistance smacked of disloyalty to the queen herself.⁵⁷ It appears that there were other occasions on which a little "arm twisting" was required to stir up a sense of social responsibility in Canada. Goldwin Smith acknowledged that the wealthy of Toronto were inclined to be apathetic and indifferent to any appeal of benevolence or social duty. He recalled an incident surrounding an unnamed viceregal lady who issued invitations to the notables of Toronto to a conference concerning a charity she patronized:

I went, expecting what an invitation to a conference implied. Instead of this, I found myself in a large room full, not of authorities on questions of charity, but of the wealthy magnates of Toronto. Her Ladyship made a speech and left the room. Then, instead of a conference about her charity, there was a call, evidently prearranged, for a subscription, and in a quarter of an hour or little more there was drawn, in some cases visibly wrung, from the lords of the dollar a sum the quarter of which local charities could hardly have coaxed out of them in a year.⁵⁸

The retiring Lady Grey seems to have taken a less active role in encouraging social responsibility, although she was known to have sponsored a garden competition for the beautification of

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Pentland, 122-3.

⁵⁷ Saywell, "Introduction," The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, xxxi-ii.

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Smith, 457-8.

Ottawa. Grey himself was quick to plunge into any scheme that his office might help to advance. He was horrified by the condition of provincial gaols and put pressure on local governments for their improvement. Indeed, his vigorous pursuit of this matter in Quebec led the Colonial Office to be concerned lest he jeopardize the imperial relationship. His activism was accompanied by a rather odd gesture -- the gift of a canary -- which was meant to brighten the lives of the prisoners.⁵⁹ Grey was also interested in immigration schemes for the disadvantaged. The encouragement of British immigration would alleviate social problems in the mother country, but would also enhance Canada's British character, which was so threatened by American influence. He feared the effect of American radical democracy, which he already saw at work in the mines and lumber camps of British Columbia. "The beautiful Province of British Columbia has the clutch of Yankee Trade unionism upon its lovely throat and it can only gasp, not breathe," he raved.⁶⁰ In projects such as this one, the governor general was able to combine a charitable activity with the larger goal of influencing Canada's social evolution.

One of the main objectives of the governors general in the social sphere involved the promotion of ethnic harmony. They began their work of advancing rapprochement among French- and English-Canadians in the most immediate arena of Ottawa society. To many, this came quite naturally. As well-bred aristocrats they found the company of the French-Canadian elite more congenial than that of nouveau-riche English businessmen and their wives. Lady Aberdeen was known to enjoy the warmth and vivacity of French-Canadian women. She lost no time in polishing her French when she arrived at Government House. With respect to religious differences, the Aberdeens' easygoing

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Hallett, 72-3.

⁶⁰ Grey, as quoted in Hallett, 87.

ecumenicalism provoked protest from less liberal Protestants, but Lord Aberdeen's gesture of asking a Roman Catholic archbishop to say a Benedicite before dinner won him praise in a francophone newspaper: "Comme l'accueil de leurs Excellences differe de la traditionnelle froideur de receptions officielles! 'le cercle' est supprime." ⁶¹ While the Aberdeens may have embraced French Canada out of a sense of liberalism, Minto seems to have gravitated to certain French Canadians because of his conservative nature. Carman Miller explains that, "old aristocratic French-Canadian families seemed natural allies against the worst effects of democracy, materialism, and the creeping vulgarization of society." ⁶² Minto was also quick to defend French-Canadian opponents to the Boer War. "At home apparently you do'nt [sic] call a man disloyal if he disapproves of the war," he noted. ⁶³ Typically, when Grey first arrived in Canada he tended to underestimate the degree of ethnic division that existed, and overestimate what he might be able to do to address it. We have to smile at the presumption of one of his early letters home to the king:

I have already received evidence that the efforts made by me to pull down the social barrier between the French and English of Montreal during my 3 days visit have not been altogether unsuccessful.... No effort will be wanting on my part to promote the entente cordiale, the fusion & intermingling of the two races, to the great & permanent benefit of all concerned. ⁶⁴

Grey does not seem to have understood why French Canadian nationalists might have been troubled by his ideal of ethnic "fusion." To the governor general a "nearly perfect a man as

⁶¹ as quoted in Pentland, 107.

⁶² Miller, 177.

⁶³ Minto to Arthur Elliot, 25 November 1900, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 1, 438.

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Grey to King Edward, 5 February 1905, Grey Papers.

can be made" would incorporate the "capacity and strength" of the Englishman and the "charm, the imagination and the courtesy" of the Frenchman.⁶⁵ He urged the mothers of Canada to take the lead in promoting ethnic accord, and reminded them that they set the social tone of Canadian life. "Remember, women not only are the most lovely of the Creator's works, but no influence is so great as theirs. ... In every age they have inspired men to be heroes, or degraded them to the level of the brutes."⁶⁶ Grey insisted that the solution to Canada's ethnic division lay with women, and if English mothers taught their children French, and French mothers taught their children English, accord would be achieved. Grey maintained that the phrase "unity in diversity" summed up the essence of the imperial relationship,⁶⁷ yet seemed not to acknowledge any contradiction between this "mosaic" approach to ethnicity and the "fusion" he frequently advocated. The ethnic divisions in Canadian society were simply too entrenched to be much affected by sentimental gestures by a well-intentioned governor general.

CULTURAL MATTERS:

The governor general's influence in the cultural sphere may well be the office's most enduring legacy. A number of tangible monuments to viceregal patronage testify to the activities of successive governors general in the promotion of a national culture. Each lent support to a variety of endeavours in the fine arts, and to more popular amusements which would boost the

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Grey, to the Women's Canadian Club of Montreal, no date, Addresses to His Excellency Earl Grey, Governor General of Canada and his speeches in Reply having relation to the resources and progress of the Dominion (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1908), 173.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 176.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 171.

national and imperial spirit, such as sports activities. The governors general also had another goal with respect to culture. In the same way that they acted as political mediators, they sought to be cultural mediators -- reconciling Canada's different ethnic components. They hoped to demonstrate that cultural diversity need not be a source of strife and that a larger imperial identity did not preclude a sense of Canadian nationalism.

The governors general imparted what may well be their most lasting Canadian legacies in the world of sport. The seemingly small gesture of the endowment of hockey and football trophies has, more than any of their loftier projects, ensured that the names of Stanley and Grey would be household words in Canada for generations. The Stanley cup may be one of the closest things to a truly national symbol that this country has. Grey and Stanley were indisputably the most successful in using sport as a means to promote a Canadian identity. But virtually every governor general has been involved, either directly or indirectly, in the promotion of the sporting life. Grey's first official act as governor general speaks volumes: he dropped the puck for the face-off in a hockey game between Ottawa and Dawson City.⁶⁸

In general, sport has figured prominently in the imperial relationship. An interest in athletic pursuits seems almost to have been a prerequisite for high administrative office. Anthony Kirk-Greene has suggested that the empire was ruled by an "athletocracy."⁶⁹ A love of the gentlemanly pursuits of shooting, fishing, riding, rowing, cricket, and the like, was clearly an asset for a viceregal aspirant. Further, a man

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Hubbard, Rideau Hall, 108.

⁶⁹ Anthony Kirk-Greene, "Badge of Office? Sport and His Excellency in the British Empire," International Journal of the History of Sport 6 (September 1989): 223.

devoted to team sports might be expected to have the right sort of attitude for an imperial post -- an understanding of the principles of leadership, and a sense of confidence. Kirk-Greene suggests that a sporting governor general might have been expected to win readier acceptance in his assigned domain. There were, he writes,

few attributes or reputations of greater advantage in helping the unknown governor to overcome the initial and inevitable suspicion attaching to a new broom than that here was a sportsman. Not necessarily a 'sport' or a 'hail-fellow-well-met' type, but a man who could be relied upon to display, in Bombay, Brisbane or Bechuanaland, those self-same qualities which would ensure his ready acceptance in British society back home -- qualities virtually guaranteed among Britons by the fact of being a sportsman.⁷⁰

The governor general might attempt to impart some of the values and virtues of athleticism to his colonial subjects in the same way that he worked to promote interest in the more refined elements of culture. The promotion of sport could be a means to enhance Canada's sense of national and imperial identity.

Successive governors general seem to have, in Sandra Gwyn's words, "fostered the cult of winter." Canada's bracing winter climate was promoted as the source of a unique northern spirit and energy. "A constitution nursed upon the oxygen of our bright winter atmosphere makes its owner feel as though he could toss about the pine trees in his glee," Lord Dufferin enthused.⁷¹ Canadians were urged to celebrate their cold winters as a distinctive national attribute. The encouragement of winter sports was part of this approach. Dufferin led the way in the 1870s. He constructed a curling rink at Rideau Hall at

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Ibid., 233.

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Dufferin, as quoted in Berger, "The True North Strong and Free," 159.

his own expense, which his successors used regularly.⁷² The Dufferins also began the custom of weekly skating parties on a rink behind Government House, a tradition Lansdowne embellished upon by hosting these in the evening by torchlight.⁷³ The Aberdeens often concluded these skating nights with a fireworks display.⁷⁴ One of the most popular winter recreations at Rideau Hall seems to have been tobogganing. A large wooden toboggan slide was constructed during the Dufferin era, and the prominent ladies and gentlemen of Ottawa society apparently did not consider it compromising to their dignity to be hurled from a careering toboggan. Sketches and photographs abound of dignified visitors attempting to negotiate the toboggan slide, often in the company of the governor general himself. Even the serious-minded Lady Aberdeen, who at times seemed irritated by the general obsession with sports, wrote in her memoirs of her tobogganing adventures with Canadian cabinet ministers. She reports that she shared one perilous ride with the aging Mackenzie Bowell.⁷⁵ Lady Stanley displayed a certain wit in the design of an "At Home" card she sent to announce one of her skating and tobogganing parties in March 1892. The card is decorated with skaters, curlers, and tobogganers, and features a pair of feet sticking out of a snow bank in the foreground.⁷⁶ In their readiness to embrace such Canadian recreations, the governors general hoped to promote a more positive image of the Canadian winter. The cold climate was glorified as a defining characteristic of this northern nation.

The individual governors general also had their own personal

⁷² Hubbard, Rideau Hall, 25.

⁷³ Gwyn, 234.

⁷⁴ Lady Aberdeen, We Twa, 51.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁷⁶ Gwyn, 234.

sports enthusiasms. Lord Stanley was known to be a keen fisherman. Sandra Gwyn remarks on Stanley's rather subdued approach to his viceregal duties, suggesting that he regarded the appointment as a sort of retirement post. The only time he really seemed to come alive, she notes, was when he was engaged in salmon fishing. His favourite spot was on the Cascapedia River near the Bay of Chaleurs, a site reserved for the personal use of the governor general. Stanley retreated to this spot frequently and built a rambling frame house there, Stanley House, which now belongs to the Canada Council. This lodge boasted one of Canada's first rural telephones, which Stanley installed to enable him to call upstream to check salmon conditions.⁷⁷ Lord Aberdeen was an enthusiastic curler and also enjoyed hockey, which his wife considered too rough. Nevertheless, the Aberdeen children took quickly to the game, and enjoyed regular matches at Government House with the A.D.C.s.⁷⁸ Minto was an avid sportsman, who enjoyed a variety of pursuits. He skied, hiked, hunted, climbed mountains, paddled canoes and was a superb rider. Under the name of "Mr. Rolly," Minto had completed in the Grand National and the French Grand National in his youth. When Lord Curzon heard of Minto's succession as Viceroy of India he had no difficulty placing him: "Isn't that the gentleman who jumps hedges?" he inquired.⁷⁹ Lady Minto was herself a gifted athlete, and was particularly fond of skating. Grey, too, enjoyed the sporting life. He learned a fondness for racquet sports and cricket at Harrow, and has been described as a nice horseman, a good shot, and a master fisherman.⁸⁰

Of course, the viceregal influence on Canada's sporting life

⁷⁷ Ibid., 234-5.

⁷⁸ Hubbard, Rideau Hall, 78.

⁷⁹ Curzon, as quoted in Kirk-Greene, "Badge of Office?" 221.

⁸⁰ Begbie, 27, 51.

did not stop at setting a positive example. Every one of the governors general of this period was conspicuous in his patronage of developing Canadian sports. Viceregal patronage could take the form of promoting sports which were unique to Canada, or those which were more British in character. Of course, even distinctly Canadian sports would serve to inculcate the same British values of manliness, strength, fair play, team spirit, and co-operation. What is more, the influence of a governor general, properly exerted, might prevent Canadian sports from falling prey to professionalism. Insistence upon amateur status for players would protect the gentlemanly character of athletic pursuits. Harold Perkin traces this spirit of discrimination back to the proverbial playing fields of Eton:

The old boys from the public schools and Oxbridge who went out to the Empire took not only the games they played at school and college but also their obsession with the distinction between the gentleman amateur and the mercenary professional which they had practised at home.⁸¹

Tellingly, all of the sports trophies established by the governors general of this period were specifically for amateur competition. How Lord Stanley must be spinning in his grave!

His contribution of the Stanley cup in 1893 was meant to promote a Canadian sport which was just beginning its rise to popularity. The game appears to have originated with the anglophone population of Montreal in the 1870s, with rules based on English field hockey. Hockey was quickly acknowledged to be an ideal forum for the demonstration of Canadian manliness, and spread readily to other parts of the Dominion.⁸² Lord Stanley's

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Harold Perkin, "Teaching the Nations How to Play: Sport and Society in the British Empire and Commonwealth," International Journal of the History of Sport 6 (September 1989): 150.

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Alan Metcalfe, Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1987), 63-9.

advocacy of the game can be seen as advocacy of the role of sports in a civilized society, and a means of exploiting a potential path to unity. Of course, his patronage was particularly suited in this instance to his personal interests. The first known book codifying the rules of the game and tracing its early development made special mention of the "auspicious" manner in which the governors general had furthered interest in the sport as a means of drawing together Canadians from various parts of the dominion.⁸³ Aberdeen also took an interest in sports as a means to elevate the country's cultural tone. Lady Aberdeen, who seldom overlooked an opportunity to exert the right sort of influence, seems to have failed to grasp the potential of this one. She considered Lord Aberdeen's interest in sports to be a distraction from more important matters.⁸⁴ Her journal entry of November 28, 1893 notes that His Excellency presented gold watches to the Lacrosse Champions and gave a speech about the value of fair play, but her description of Aberdeen's talk as "a little harangue" almost suggests a toe-tapping impatience with such trivial matters.⁸⁵ Minto's love of sports is reflected in his patronage of a variety of athletic pursuits. He donated cups for figure skating, curling and lacrosse. Minto's biographer Carman Miller wryly notes that it was typical of Minto to endorse a sport such as lacrosse which was already in decline.⁸⁶ His experience at the track notwithstanding, Minto had a marked proclivity for backing the wrong horse. Naturally, the Earl Grey did not lag behind his viceregal predecessors in official patronage of sport. He

⁸³ Arthur Farrell, Shamrock Hockey Team, Montreal, Hockey: Canada's Royal Winter Game (Montreal: C.R. Corneil, 1899), 19.

⁸⁴ Saywell, "Introduction," The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, xxvi.

⁸⁵ Lady Aberdeen, 28 November 1893, The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, 35.

⁸⁶ Miller, 191.

donated a cup for golf and, of course, the famous Grey cup for football. Grey left the details of the awarding of the cup to a group of trustees, subject only to the provision that "the cup must remain always under purely amateur conditions (original underlined)." ⁸⁷ Like hockey, football had English roots, but had evolved in Canada to take on a distinctive character. In this way, both sports were a perfect symbol of the imperial relationship. They were clearly Canadian, but had British ancestors.

From the days of Dufferin, the governors general embraced the challenge of raising the level of Canadian culture. They saw it as their duty to encourage cultural activities that were above the mundane material concerns that seemed to preoccupy most Canadians. While much of what was deemed praiseworthy was derivative of British models, the fact that works of art were being produced in Canada was what was important. Home-grown culture was an essential plank in the national identity the viceregal office worked to promote. At the same time, due deference to the British tradition confirmed Canada's status as a member of the empire. Lord Dufferin called for the creation of a National Gallery, and was active in urging architectural preservation of important Canadian landmarks. The maintenance of the old walls of Quebec City owe much to his efforts. Dufferin also conceived of a Canadian Academy of Fine Arts, modelled on Britain's Royal Academy, which was eventually established in 1880 under the direction of the Marquis of Lorne. Cultural activities flourished under Lorne and Princess Louise, both of whom were artistically inclined and were acquainted with many renown artistic and literary figures. Lorne established the Royal Society of Canada, also modelled on the British original. He was the honorary president of the Ontario Society of Artists, a post some of his successors assumed. The

⁸⁷ Sir John Hanbury-Williams to D.B. Macdonald, 2 April 1909, Grey Cup Trustees Papers, National Archives of Canada.

viceregal couple frequently attended art shows, concerts and other cultural events, which raised the profile of these occasions. But Lorne's support for Canadian culture did not stop at mere patronage. He quite literally rolled up his sleeves and churned out a wide range of projects on a Canadian theme. He painted and sketched landscapes while on tour, and composed poetry which lauded the virtues of Canada's wilderness. One such offering, "Westward Ho," provides an example of Lorne's cultural boosterism:

Away to the West, Westward Ho! Westward Ho!
 Where, over the prairies, the summer winds blow!
 Why known to so few were its rivers and plains
 Where rustle so tall in their ripeness the grains?
 The bison and Red men alone cared to roam
 O'er realms that to millions must soon give a home...

To lands yet more happy than Europe's, for here
 We would the young nations for freedom to rear,
 Full strongly we built, and have nought to pull down,⁸⁸
 For, true to ourselves, we are true to the Crown...

With the help of Arthur Sullivan, Lorne also composed a national anthem, "Dominion Hymn," which, bewilderingly, failed to catch on.

Dufferin and Lorne established a precedent of a high level of viceregal participation in cultural affairs. Their successors followed this model to a greater or lesser extent, depending on their individual inclinations. The Stanleys hosted musical and theatrical evenings at Government House. The Aberdeens attempted to promote interest in Canadian history with historical pageants. A fancy dress ball held in February 1896 on the theme of Canadian history was a particular success. Guests performed historic dances in costumes ranging from that of a Viking to an Acadian peasant. The Aberdeens organized "An Evening with the Canadian Poets" at Rideau Hall, featuring the works of Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott, Wilfred

⁸⁸ Lorne, as quoted in Cowan, 37.

Campbell, Bliss Carmen, Agnes Machar, and Pauline Johnson. Pauline Johnson was further promoted with an introduction to the colonial secretary, Lord Ripon, who in turn arranged for the Iroquois poet to mingle in the best London society.⁸⁹ The Aberdeens continued an earlier scheme to distribute literature to Canadians in remote areas. Aberdeen was also instrumental in promoting standardized testing in Canadian music schools. He encouraged the Associated Board of Royal Schools of Music to introduce their examination system into Canada. Minto apparently shared Aberdeen's convictions in this regard, but saw his well-intentioned advocacy become a point of contention. He lent his support to Samuel Aitken, a representative of the Associated Board of Musical Examiners of the Royal College of Music, who came to Canada in February 1899. Unfortunately, Aitken's attitude of superiority with the "colonials" reflected back on Minto, and gave yet another opening for the governor general's critics to accuse him of imperial heavy-handedness.⁹⁰ On a more positive note, Minto was instrumental in the establishment of a permanent building for Canada's public archives. He had been disturbed to see that many important Canadian historical documents were rotting away in musty cellars, with no one assigned responsibility for them. Minto recommended that Dr. A. S. Doughty, the parliamentary librarian be appointed deputy keeper of the records. He further enlisted Doughty's help in the preparation of more satisfactory text books to teach Canadian history.⁹¹ Lady Minto participated in a standing committee for the Promotion of Industrial and Fine Arts in Canada.

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Maria Tippett, Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 65.

⁹⁰ Miller, 62-4.

⁹¹ Buchan, 187-8

Minto merits special mention for his patronage of native art and culture. He was concerned with defending the traditions of native Canadians against what he perceived as a government policy aimed at their eradication. His energetic advocacy of native rights was another reason Minto earned the enmity of Clifford Sifton, minister of the interior.⁹² The governor general made a point of touring Reserves during his western trips, and showed a keen appreciation of traditional native dress and art. On one occasion, he locked horns with an agent of the Department of Indian Affairs, who had forbidden native dancing on the grounds that "the harm done by one of these dances is sufficient to neutralize the work of years."⁹³ Minto rejected such claims as exaggerated and laughed at the presumption of the Scottish-Canadian agent: "I cannot help thinking of the Highlanders Kilt, a far more barbaric dress than that of any Red Indian."⁹⁴ Minto had been embarrassed earlier in his career when he accompanied governor general Lansdowne to the northwest as military secretary. Lansdowne's high-handed reception of the Cree Chief Poundmaker had apparently left a lasting impression on the future governor general.⁹⁵ Lansdowne treated the meetings as an amusing spectacle and confided to his mother that he had had difficulty keeping a straight face when being introduced to chiefs with names like "Bad Dried Meat."⁹⁶ Minto was discouraged to find that few Canadians showed any sense of appreciation of the cultural value of native artifacts. He intervened when he learned that a valuable collection of such

⁹² Miller, 179.

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quoted in Minto to Laurier, 17 February 1903, Lord Minto's Canadian Papers, vol. 2, 253.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 254.

⁹⁵ Miller, 176.

⁹⁶ Cowan, 46.

articles was to be broken up and sold on the open market. He was unable to convince any Canadian museum to buy the collection but did succeed in persuading the British Museum to purchase it. He was not entirely satisfied with this outcome, since it meant the collection was to leave Canada, but was relieved that the artifacts were not to be lost altogether.⁹⁷

The enthusiastic Earl Grey was even more active in the promotion of Canadian culture than were his immediate predecessors. Grey bombarded Laurier with a constant stream of ideas for elevating the tone of Canadian life and cementing the imperial tie. Even Grey's admirers acknowledge that he spread himself rather thinly. Leander Starr Jameson wryly admitted that

No man ever had more babies than Albert Grey, but he was always leaving them on the doorstep of his friends -- he simply hadn't the time to bring them all up himself. We very often supported some of his more decorative ideas in which we had no faith at all, rather than damp his ardour or hurt his feelings.⁹⁸

Grey began a collection of portraits of earlier governors general to adorn the walls of Rideau Hall. When on a tour of Newfoundland, Grey spontaneously extended an invitation to a St. John's musical group to compete the following year in the Dominion Music and Drama Festival -- a gesture which he hoped would enhance enthusiasm for Confederation. Such a festival did not actually exist at the time Grey issued the invitation, but the governor general was quick to remedy this. The Earl Grey Musical and Dramatic Trophy Competition was held in Ottawa in 1907 and 1908, in Montreal in 1909, in Toronto in 1910, and in Winnipeg the following year, but was not continued by Grey's

⁹⁷ Miller, 179.

⁹⁸ Leander Starr Jameson, as quoted in Graham Sims, Paladin of Empire: Earl Grey and Rhodesia (Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Central Africa Historical Association, Pamphlet 26), 3.

successors.⁹⁹ Grey tended to exaggerate the impact of his symbolic gestures. He wrote to London of the competition he was sponsoring: "How frivolous this will sound to you... but please realise that there is more politics than frivolity in this movement."¹⁰⁰ To Grey, such events provided an opportunity for residents of different parts of the dominion to fraternize and so gain a spirit of national identity, and served at the same time to elevate the tone of Canadian life. Grey explained to the colonial secretary:

As the chief danger in front of Canada is the possibility that conflicting interests between the east and the west may give birth to a movement in favour of disintegration, the Musical and Dramatic Competition, so far as it goes, does good in helping to create an identity of tastes and aspirations. It is also useful to give the people an opportunity of expending their energies in something more ennobling than the hunt for dollars. The making of a comfortable livelihood by honourable means is obviously a first duty, but when that comfortable livelihood has been secured and everything is sacrificed to increasing the pile, this Dollaritis becomes a disease which has to be fought. My Dramatic and Musical Competition is one of the doses of medicine which I am endeavouring to make my patients take.¹⁰¹

Grey also sought to dose his Canadian "patients" with appropriate literature. He did all in his power to promote literary works which carried the right imperial and national message. He admired Stephen Leacock's work and arranged for him to make a tour of the empire to lecture on imperial organization.¹⁰² Grey was so impressed with Robert Stead's The Empire Builders (1908) that he arranged to purchase an entire

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Tippett, 55.

¹⁰⁰ Grey, as quoted in Tippett, 66.

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Grey to Harcourt, 2 May 1911, Grey Papers.

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Hubbard, Rideau Hall, 112.

printing of it. He had particular praise for the way this work warned the country against the "oriental menace."¹⁰³ On a visit to Prince Edward Island, Grey made it known that he wished to meet Lucy Maude Montgomery. He believed that Anne of Green Gables demonstrated the very sort of Canadianism that ought to be encouraged. Grey was constantly on the look out for Canadian literary talent and often sent manuscripts by Canadian authors to his friends, and urged editors to review Canadian works.¹⁰⁴ Like others who held the viceregal post, Grey believed that historical preservation was an important requirement of Canadian national identity. He was the chief agitator in the bid to have the Plains of Abraham preserved as an historic monument. He had been horrified to see this site desecrated by the presence of a provincial gaol and the Ross Rifle Factory. Grey was also the instigator of a scheme to have a statue of Nelson erected in Montreal to commemorate the centenary of the Admiral's death, although he took pains to have it appear that this gesture was the result of spontaneous imperial fervour on the part of that city's inhabitants.¹⁰⁵ One of Grey's grander unrealized plans was the construction of an enormous beckoning statue on the cliffs of Quebec, the "Angel of Peace," which would stand six inches taller than the Statue of Liberty. He also failed to realize his ambition of seeing a new Government House built at Rockcliffe -- a veritable royal palace which would be a visible symbol of Canada's imperial commitment.

Grey was especially concerned that Canadian history be interpreted in a way which would enhance national and imperial unity. While unveiling a monument in Quebec to casualties of the Boer War, Grey insisted that the conflict had been fought in support of "the principles of Papineau as opposed to those of

¹⁰³ Grey, as quoted in Tippet, 65.

¹⁰⁴ Hallett, 308.

¹⁰⁵ Grey to Laurier, 28 March 1905, Grey Papers.

the Family Compact."¹⁰⁶ But Grey's greatest coup in this regard was clearly his handling of the Quebec tercentenary celebration. A contemporary described the occasion as "a triumph of tact, a tribute paid by success to the clever management of apparently conflicting conditions."¹⁰⁷ Remarkably, Grey managed to turn the 1908 tercentenary celebration into an imperial extravaganza that included a celebration of the British victory over the French at the Plains of Abraham. Grey took advantage of the occasion to establish a national park at the site of the historic battle. Grey devoted years of work to the project, soliciting funds for appropriate monuments and issuing invitations to dignitaries all over the world. The inclusion of France in the festivities would, he explained to the colonial secretary, "strengthen still further the Entente Cordiale."¹⁰⁸ He tried to impress upon the appropriate powers the importance of having the king himself attend, but settled at last for the Prince of Wales. Statesmen from all corners of the empire attended, along with such imperial notables as Doctor Jameson and Field Marshall Lord Roberts, who reviewed the troops assembled on the Plains.¹⁰⁹ Grey also managed to convince the descendants of Montcalm, Levis and Murray to appear. The spectacle included a display of ships of the Royal Navy's Atlantic fleet and visiting battleships from France and the United States.

Predictably, there was some objection from francophones of Quebec who resented Grey's co-opting of the anniversary of Champlain's landing for imperial purposes. Grey was not

¹⁰⁶ Grey, at unveiling of Boer War monument, Quebec, 15 August 1905, Addresses to His Excellency Earl Grey, 61.

¹⁰⁷ Hopkins, "Earl Grey's Administration," 227.

¹⁰⁸ Grey to Lyttelton, 30 March 1905, as quoted in Hallett, 147.

¹⁰⁹ Dr. Doughty and Colonel Wood, The King's Book of Quebec (Ottawa: The Mortimer Co., 1911), 263.

defeated by this difficulty, however. He insisted that the planned extravaganza was a celebration of both races history in Canada. He proposed to consecrate the Ste. Foy battlefield along with that of the Plains of Abraham, "and by so doing commemorate the two battles in which the two contending races were alternately victorious, and in both of which the vanquished were entitled to as great honour and glory as the victors."¹¹⁰ Grey went on to point out that Montcalm was victorious on the four occasions on which he met the British and asserted that "there is fair ground for the argument that he would have been again victorious on Sep. 13. 1759 if he had not been improperly interfered with by Vaudreuil, the Governor of Quebec." These "additional facts" made it possible, Grey explained, for the French Canadians to give his plan for the tercentenary celebration, not only their assent, but their "enthusiastic approval."¹¹¹ A commemorative volume of the occasion which Grey arranged to have produced went even further in creatively interpreting Quebec's history. The commemorative King's Book of Quebec asserts that the Battle of the Plains marked the fall of the old regime and the beginning of the new, when two races, formerly opposed, united in a determination to make Canada worthy of a foremost position in the Empire to which she belonged.¹¹² The tercentenary celebration, this source claims, had the effect of showing that the French and British regimes were "two halves of one connected whole."

But its special distinction was to prove that equal honour was due to the heroes on both sides, who met in arms at the cross roads, to decide which was the better flag to follow for the rest of the way. It has long been acknowledged that the

110

Grey to King Edward, 21 October 1907, Grey Papers.

111 Ibid.

112

Doughty and Wood, 124.

decision then reached was the wiser of the two alternatives.¹¹³

The tercentennial celebration included historical pageants of some key events in Quebec history, but tactfully did not re-enact the actual battles. Instead, both the "English" and the "French" armies were to stride across the battlefield together. Further, the pageant was conducted entirely in French, to deflect any criticisms that the occasion had been co-opted.¹¹⁴ Grey boasted to Chamberlain after the Tercentenary that we "may hope to see the spirit of a new imperialism flourish even in Quebec."¹¹⁵ The role Grey played in the Quebec tercentennial celebration might be seen as an extreme illustration of the viceregal agenda in Canada during the era of the new imperialism. By approaching Canadian history in a creative revisionist spirit Grey sought to develop a all-embracing brand of Canadian nationalism that would be reconcilable with British imperialism. His optimism that this could be achieved rested on his failure to grasp the real essence of nationalism. And of course the presence of a genuine nationalism in Quebec guaranteed that such a project would have limited success.

¹¹³

Ibid., 134-5.

¹¹⁴

Hallett, 166.

¹¹⁵ Grey to Chamberlain, 1 August 1908, as quoted in Hallett, 174.

CONCLUSION

The governor general had ample sphere to pursue the dual agenda of advocating imperial goals and a select brand of Canadian nationalism. Each used the patronage of cultural endeavours, the opportunities for social influence and a number of specific openings in the military, political, and diplomatic sphere to exert influence. Each adapted his approach to his individual interests and inclinations, and to prevailing circumstances which affected the imperial relationship, but the basic assumptions remained quite constant. The governors general of this period sought to exploit opportunities to encourage a sense of patriotic pride in the dominion which would presumably predispose her people to assume greater responsibility for imperial objectives. Grey obligingly summed up his conception of the viceregal mission in a letter to Laurier:

As a rule of course Nationalism is a step towards Imperialism, and it is the recognition of this truth which has made me, a race Imperialist, do everything in my power to promote Canadian Nationalism.¹

In the final analysis, long range success in these objectives proved to be elusive. The Canadian nationalism the governors general promoted was in reality a wider Pan-British nationalism. As such, it did not really require the active advocacy of the governor general. In the considerable portion of English Canada where this sentiment already held sway, the governor general was simply preaching to the converted. In any other sector of Canadian society -- most notably Quebec -- the synthesis of nationalism and imperialism was clearly impossible. The governors general could only resort to creative generalities and

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Grey to Laurier, 17 October 1909, as quoted in Kendle, 128.

vague metaphors to try to reconcile the imperial ideal with a nationalism that was truly and exclusively Canadian. On a few occasions a bridge might seem to have been constructed, but in reality it was composed only of poetic oratory and symbolic gestures and would crumble if it were made to bear weight.

The conspicuous lack of success the governors general met with in their dual objectives illustrates the inherent incompatibility of Canadian and imperial objectives and conditions. The two could only be made to seem reconcilable if each remained hazily defined and metaphoric. Even then the governor general was forced to "walk a tightrope," trying to avoid any issue that would reveal the essential division and upset a precarious balance. The role of the governor general during this period serves as a clear illustration of the very problem with Canada's relationship with Britain. The position is a synecdoche of the imperial relationship. Canadian history which takes as its goal the affirmation of an all-embracing nationalist spirit tends to overlook the continuance of the viceregal role. The governor general is an unwelcome reminder of the persistence of colonial status. Yet if the objective is to understand the past, and not to simply bolster nationalist myths, the governor general is an important key to Canada's history.

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