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## CANADA'S REJECTION OF RECIPROCITY IN 1911

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The 1911 reciprocity episode presents, *inter alia*, an interesting study of propaganda enlisted in the aid of protection both above and below the Canadian-American frontier. The United States had been aggressively protectionist since the Civil War; Canada, rebuffed in repeated efforts to secure reciprocity with the United States, had at length turned to a retaliatory protectionism of her own.<sup>1</sup> The years 1909-10 produced factors which led responsible leaders in each country to seek in reciprocity a solution of vexing domestic problems.

On both sides of the border political parties old in power viewed the future in the light of alarming symptoms. In Canada, French-Canadian Nationalism took from the Government, on the naval issue, a by-election in a district strongly Liberal since 1887.<sup>2</sup> This boded ill for a Government soon bound to face a general election. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, touring the prairies the previous summer, had been made unpleasantly aware that the farmers wanted, among other things, a renewal of reciprocity.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, storm warnings were up.

In Washington, too, the barometer was sinking. The Republican party, prey to internal bickerings,<sup>4</sup> had failed to implement its own promises of tariff reform when the Payne-Aldrich Act of 1909 left rates high and disappointed reformers in the party. Particularly disappointed too, and particularly vocal, were the newspaper publishers, since the Act failed to grant them a much desired reduction in the duty on Canadian newsprint. These made life miserable for the good-natured William Howard Taft, in office for a year without affirmative accomplishment, and unpleasantly aware of a mid-term Congressional election which would bring him to book in November, 1910.<sup>5</sup> Reciprocity with Canada seemed, in the spring of that year, to offer Taft at once an opportunity for accomplishment and a chance to quiet the angry publishers. He made the proposal at a meeting with William H. Fielding, Laurier's Minister of Finance, at Albany, New York, April 20, and the two parted committed to the idea.<sup>6</sup> That Laurier

<sup>1</sup>Tariff tendencies are conveniently accessible in Edward Porritt, *Sixty Years of protection in Canada, 1846-1907: Where industry leans on the politicians* (London, 1908), and F. W. Taussig, *Tariff history of the United States* (ed. 8, New York, 1931).

<sup>2</sup>J. Castell Hopkins (comp.), *The Canadian annual review of public affairs, 1910* (Toronto, 1911), 139-211; *Toronto News*, Oct. 24, 28, Nov. 3, 4, 1910.

<sup>3</sup>Hopkins, *Canadian annual review, 1910*, 265-86. The *Grain growers' guide* (Winnipeg), and *Toronto Globe*, for July, August, and September, 1910, cover this story.

<sup>4</sup>Two of these were the Ballinger-Pinchot controversy and the unhorsing of Speaker Joseph G. Cannon, described briefly in L. M. Hacker and B. B. Kendrick, *The United States since 1865* (New York, 1932), 392-3, 410-12.

<sup>5</sup>*Bulletins of the American newspaper publishers' association*, no. 2037, "B" Special (New York), Aug. 3, 1909, 545.

<sup>6</sup>*Canadian tariff negotiations* (n.p., n.d.), 1-19, covers this episode. This pamphlet, in *The Philander C. Knox papers* in the Library of Congress, was evidently compiled for the American Secretary of State by Charles M. Pepper, who was prominent in the American side of the negotiations. It gives in printed form many documents preserved in manuscript in the Department of State and is the most important source for the American side of the negotiation of reciprocity through

was also minded to seek surcease from domestic difficulties in foreign negotiations is evidenced by the promptitude with which Fielding presently accepted Taft's invitation to further discussions.

These found the United States anxious and Canada somewhat coy, since the Government felt the pressure of Canadian business interests exerted against concessions to the southern neighbour. Considerable jockeying, carried through a meeting at Ottawa in November and another at Washington in January, 1911, produced an agreement. The main point of difference concerned the degree of reciprocity in manufactures. The Canadians desired to secure a market for their natural products but, mindful of their comfortable alliance with protected interests at home, were very loath to leave the way open for any trickle through the dike of protection. A formula was suggested by the United States in November which guided the later negotiations: "in taking up the manufacturing schedules in detail the effort on our part would be as much as possible to differentiate and segregate those articles affecting the smaller industries on both sides of the water [*sic*], so that they might compete on equal terms and leave the rates on the industries of the great combinations unchanged where they involved Canadian objection."<sup>7</sup> The ultimate agreement, announced in January, 1911, attempted faithfully to mirror the desires of both parties: many agricultural products were allowed to enter the United States duty free; in return American agricultural implements entered Canada at reduced rates, and identical rates were levied upon the exchange of a list of manufactures numerically imposing but economically unimportant. Thus did Fielding and Laurier attempt to benefit Canada's farmers without injuring her industries.

Meantime the mere prospect of reciprocity activated a number of Canadian elements into hostility. The manufacturers, represented as being "very nervous" during the March parleys, discussed in September the desirability of a nation-wide propaganda campaign to enlighten the people on the benefits of protection. The Conservative leader, Mr. Robert L. Borden, voiced doubts of Canada's position in an imperial trade federation if she fettered her fiscal freedom "by embarrassing commercial treaties and understandings . . ." with foreign countries.<sup>8</sup> By the early autumn the newspaper clans began to gather for the fray and marshalled arguments favourable to protection in general. Thus the lines were being drawn even before the agreement was formulated.

The announcement of the agreement on January 26, 1911, undoubtedly took the opposition between wind and water. Fielding's stout apology stressed the concessions made by the United States to Canadian raw materials and the lowered duties on imports of agricultural implements, and insisted upon the safe position of Canadian manufacturers. It was particularly disconcerting to western Conservatives, who had seen reciprocity as a move toward tariff reform. Borden, replying, dutifully strove

November 18, 1910. See also *Tariff relations between the United States and the Dominion of Canada: Correspondence concerning negotiations, 1910* (Ottawa, 1910), and the *Toronto Globe* for March, 1910. The *Globe's* editor, Dr. James A. Macdonald, played an important part in arranging the Taft-Fielding meeting.

<sup>7</sup>*Canadian tariff negotiations*, 25-89.

<sup>8</sup>*Industrial Canada* (Toronto), XI, 251-333; *Toronto News*, June 25, 1910. The files of the *Toronto News*, the *Toronto World*, and *Montreal Gazette* support the Conservative-protectionist point of view, while the *Toronto Globe* took the other side.

to put the Government in the wrong, but his somewhat tentative remarks emphasized the dangers of the agreement to imperial relations almost as much as its distinctively Canadian aspects.<sup>9</sup> Out-of-doors various interests began to express themselves. Railway officials, manufacturers of agricultural implements, boards of trade, and fruit-growers were heard early, on a prevailing note of hostility; there were, however, audible minorities in several instances.<sup>10</sup> The press generally followed party lines, with an occasional Conservative journal deserting the ranks to support the agreement for a time, and others delaying definite commitments until the party's course in Parliament had been clarified. Press opinion was predominantly hostile in Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia; the Maritimes and the prairies were favourable.<sup>11</sup> Arguments combined economics with the agreement's dangers to national and particularly to imperial welfare. The imperial factor was useful in placing the matter upon a patriotic level and above mere partisan contention. Even so early, Conservative journals introduced matters external to the economics of reciprocity, but later to be of considerable value to its political opponents: appeals were made to the racial feelings of the French and aspersions were cast upon the purity of the Government's administrative record.<sup>12</sup> Liberal journals faced a problem which was always serious and ultimately insoluble: they must convince the Canadian public that reciprocity was economically good and politically safe, and they must overcome opposition attacks on both these counts. Early discussion made it clear that the Liberal papers needed to spend almost as much time saying "No" to Conservative arguments as to singing reciprocity's praises.

With the agreement thus before Parliament and country, the problem involved in its rejection may now be stated, preliminary to an examination of the forces causing its failure. Why did an arrangement deliberately directed toward giving the products of an agricultural country a new outlet, representing the achievement of an end vainly sought for years by bipartisan efforts, and sponsored by a party long ensconced in power and led by the brilliant Laurier, go down to one of the most spectacular defeats in the history of the Dominion? The following pages attempt to trace the roles played by economic factors, by imperial relationships, by the United States, and by time itself in contributing to the mounting tide of loyalty to country and to Empire, and of accentuated fear of the neighbour to the south, under which reciprocity was buried.

It is obvious that Canadian beneficiaries of protection, Canadian rail-roads managing lines built to defy natural trade routes by virtue of government subsidies, and bankers attuned to the interests of these powerful clients, would alike distrust any proposal which would lower tariff barriers or allow commerce to seek its natural level. These interests were geographically concentrated and numerically insignificant. Their influence,

<sup>9</sup>Canada, *House of Commons debates*, 3rd sess., 11th Parliament (5 vol., Ottawa, 1910-11), II, 2440-78, 2497-502. Cited subsequently as *Hansard*.

<sup>10</sup>*Grain growers' guide*, Feb. 8, summarizes the attitudes of railroad leaders. Other interests are noted in *Edmonton Daily Bulletin*, Jan. 30; *Toronto Globe*, Jan. 31; *Montreal Daily Star*, Feb. 1, 1911.

<sup>11</sup>The discussion of early press opinion is based upon examination of ten files from Ontario, five from Quebec, six from the Maritimes, six from the Prairie Provinces, and one from British Columbia. Obviously, individual citation is impossible; an effort has been made to reflect the tenor of press opinion.

<sup>12</sup>*Montreal Star*, Jan. 31; *Halifax Herald*, Jan. 30, Feb. 1, 1911.

which it is here suggested was dominant in defeating the Taft-Fielding agreement, had therefore to be exerted so as to move popular majorities to hostility or to fear. Both time and circumstance aided these interests in the unfolding of a gradually-developing plan which used Conservative press and party as a vehicle of reciprocity's destruction. A number of factors forwarded this plan. The agreement involved the United States, and pious platitudes about an undefended frontier had not yet sufficed to make all Canadians love their neighbours. Again, the alleged danger of a weakened imperial tie made a waving Union Jack an imposing weapon in the opponents' arsenal. An early parliamentary verdict (which contemporaries well-nigh unanimously agreed would have been a favourable one) was prevented by lack of closure and desire to move slowly lest the United States might act unfavourably. Congress failing to act in regular course, the necessity of a special session gave time for Canadian opposition to harden into obstruction, until Laurier had to leave to assist in the crowning of a King. When he returned the initiative had passed to his opponents, now in an excellent tactical position to force an election which could be fought on the positive side by appealing to national and imperial patriotism and on the negative side by saying "No" to the Government's programme without having to advance constructive measures of their own.

The first organized opposition after the agreement was announced capitalized upon the defection from their party of eighteen Toronto Liberals. The group, probably organized by Z. A. Lash, represented the Board of Trade, five banks, two railroads, three manufacturers, two life insurance companies, and other interests employing a total of 110,000 men. Its Manifesto of February 20 denounced reciprocity as an enemy of Canadian nationality and the British connection. Its main contribution was the launching, at a mass-meeting in Massey Hall, March 9, of the Canadian National League.<sup>13</sup> The League, headed by Lash with Arthur Hawkes as secretary and Clifford Sifton (whose defection Laurier later said cost the Liberals their continuance in power<sup>14</sup>) as *sub rosa* adviser, played an exceedingly important role in the ensuing battle.<sup>15</sup>

Hawkes states that a meeting at Montreal attended by Lash, Sifton, Sir Hugh Graham of the Montreal *Daily Star*, and himself, launched a far-flung propaganda campaign under League auspices, the expenses of which were met by Lash personally from funds presumably collected from the Eighteen. It included publication of a number of pamphlets, among which were *The road to Washington*, exposing the intention of the United States to accomplish the economic and political absorption of the Dominion; *Home market and farm*, directed to the identity of agricultural and industrial interest in the maintenance of protection; and *Reciprocity with the United States—Canadian nationality, British connection and fiscal independence*. A press campaign, opened even before the formation of the League, offered to buy space in newspapers of both parties for material

<sup>13</sup>Toronto *Globe*, March 10, 1911, describes the meeting, which was addressed by Sir Mortimer Clark.

<sup>14</sup>John W. Dafoe, *Clifford Sifton in relation to his times* (Toronto, 1931), 377; Winnipeg *Free Press*, Sept. 21, 1929.

<sup>15</sup>Hawkes's article in the Winnipeg *Free Press*, cited above, tells of his own relations with Sifton and with the campaign. Lash presented a collection of pamphlets to the Public Archives of Canada telling the story of the League's propaganda activities: *Canadian National League campaign of 1911 against reciprocity with the United States of America*, (n.p., n.d.), no. 3849.

originally appearing in the *Star* and the *Canadian Century*. A Montreal advertising firm pushed this so energetically that it was asserted late in April that the *Canadian Century* articles were appearing in four hundred rural weeklies. The influence of the *Star* upon the opposition press emerged as one of the most powerful factors in the whole situation.<sup>16</sup> Other propaganda moves of some moment were conducted by the Anti-Reciprocity League, functioning from Montreal by circulating petitions, and the "Appeal to the British born," launched by Hawkes upon advice of Sifton, through a pamphlet of the same title. This was an effort to appeal to the racial instincts of an estimated quarter million old-countrymen, half of whom had migrated to Canada since the 1908 election and presumably were keenly desirous of preserving the British connection.<sup>17</sup>

While these engines of propaganda were in the making, parliamentary discussion opened February 9, two days before congressional oratory commenced. By this time Conservative spines, particularly from Ontario, had been stiffened by contact with their constituents. This enabled the party to unite upon a programme of opposition, after nearly a week of stormy caucuses which opened in an atmosphere of uncertainty and divided sentiment.<sup>18</sup> Thus was launched a struggle covering twenty-five legislative days during February, March, April, and early May. This debate, carried on against a background of events in the United States, and of growing hostility in Canada, marked important developments in reciprocity's progress to oblivion. By the time Parliament adjourned to allow Laurier to attend the Coronation and the Imperial Conference, the Liberals had lost their advantage of surprise, had been forced on the defensive, and faced the likelihood of an appeal to the country.

At this point a brief recapitulation of events below the border may illuminate Canadian developments. President Taft's failure to secure passage of his agreement at the regular session of Congress has been noted. He was therefore forced to call a special session which assembled April 4. Here the House acted promptly (April 21), but Senate hearings lasted until early May and the bill was not passed until July 22. This delay, particularly failure to act at the short session, strengthened the position of the Canadian opposition—if the United States did not act, why should Canada hurry to bind herself? Again, the lengthy congressional debate furnished much ammunition for the Canadian discussion, particularly for the opposition, for every favourable argument below the border could be adapted into an unfavourable one above. Finally, American leaders themselves contributed a series of almost unbelievably inept statements which no Liberal glosses could free from damaging implications.

Taft's anxiety to place the agreement in a good light before the American public made him the chief offender. He said in his message of transmittal that the Canadian people were "coming to the parting of the ways."<sup>19</sup> On April 27, speaking before the American Newspaper Pub-

<sup>16</sup>Edmonton *Bulletin*, Feb. 17; Saint John *Daily Telegraph and the Sun*, April 26; *Grain growers' guide*, March 15, May 3, 1911. It should be noted that the author has found no evidence explicitly connecting this press campaign with the League. Hawkes placed Lash's expenditures at \$26,400.

<sup>17</sup>Toronto *Daily Star*, March 6; Toronto *Globe*, June 7, 1911; Dafeo, *Sifton*, 371.

<sup>18</sup>Henry Borden (ed.), *Robert Laird Borden: His memoirs* (New York, 1938), I, 303-4; Montreal *Star*, Feb. 1-7, 1911.

<sup>19</sup>*Congressional record* (Washington, 1874 ff.), 61st Cong., 3rd sess., 1515.

lishers' Association, he asserted that: "The forces which are at work in England and in Canada to separate her by a Chinese wall from the United States and to make her part of an imperial commercial band reaching from England around the world to England again by a system of preferential tariffs, will derive an impetus from the rejection of this treaty, and if we would have reciprocity with all the advantages that I have described and that I earnestly and sincerely believe will follow upon its adoption, we must take it now or give it up forever."<sup>20</sup> In the same speech he said: "The government is one controlled entirely by the people, and the bond uniting the dominion to the mother country is light and almost imperceptible." In their context these remarks are obviously directed to trade matters; they were unfortunately susceptible of being lifted from their context and twisted to convey political threats to national integrity and imperial solidarity. A more obvious and even more maladroit threat to the British connection was uttered by Champ Clark, Democratic Speaker-designate, during the first House debate, in which he advocated annexation of Canada "because I hope to see the day when the American flag will float over every square foot of the British-North American possessions clear to the North Pole. . . ."<sup>21</sup> This statement, despite prompt presidential repudiation and repeated official and press denials, furnished Canadian opposition one of its most potent weapons. Together, Taft and Clark did much to defeat the agreement that meant so much to each.

The parliamentary debates were significant along two lines: they served as a vehicle for the presentation of arguments on both sides, and they foreshadowed opposition strategy. All the important arguments went into the record in February, when debate reached the high-water mark of parliamentary discussion. The national, imperial, and economic consequences of the agreement were canvassed thoroughly. Many followed Borden's lead and asked, in effect, "Why not let well enough alone?"<sup>22</sup> Others argued that the ministry had no popular mandate for the proposed action.<sup>23</sup> Others were alarmed at the uncertain duration of the agreement.<sup>24</sup> On the national-imperial front concern was voiced lest reciprocity destroy Canada's fiscal freedom and endanger the tariff preference to Britain.<sup>25</sup> The danger of annexation, prominent in the later discussion, was less noticed at this stage.<sup>26</sup>

Among economic arguments, fear was expressed lest the most-favoured-nation clauses extend favours granted the United States to all of Britain's possessions and to many foreign countries.<sup>27</sup> The imminent danger to Canada's far-flung east-west transportation lanes was noted.<sup>28</sup> The whole Conservative argument echoed the refrain that the producer, in whose interest the Government had professedly made the arrangement, would be grievously injured by the competition which reciprocity would make possible.<sup>29</sup> Thus reciprocity's opponents, in Canada as well as in the United States, made their chief plea to the producing interests; the farmer, rather than the manufacturer, was pushed to the fore as the

<sup>20</sup>New York *Tribune*, April 28, 1911. <sup>21</sup>*Record*, 61st Cong., 3rd sess., 2520.

<sup>22</sup>*Hansard*, II, 3284-324, 3685, 3750; III, 4003.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 3581, 3738; III, 4072, 4085, 4389.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 3582, 3754.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 3742, 3744; III, 4064, 4089, 4091.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 3586, 3742-3; III, 4069-70.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, III, 4096-7.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 3693; III, 3991.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 3586 ff., 3741; III, 4094-5, 4172, 4182, 4394, 4401-2.

principal sufferer. By the same token, Liberals emphasized the larger market which reciprocity would provide, while reciprocity's friends south of the border insisted that it would not harm the United States farmer.<sup>30</sup> Liberal debaters spent most of their time refuting Conservative contentions, which exceeded their own both in number and variety.<sup>31</sup> This first period of discussion launched the principal arguments on both sides, preserved a fairly high level of courtesy and urbanity, and stuck fairly closely to the point at issue.

This courtesy and urbanity may have had something to do with a revolt against Borden's leadership of the party in late March, seemingly led by Montreal and Quebec capitalist elements in disagreement with his too-gentlemanly conduct of the campaign.<sup>32</sup> He survived the challenge to lead a further fight emerging in April as an evident effort to make Parliament a sounding-board to magnify the volume of hostility being stirred up in the country. Another note appeared in May—Why not wait until the United States acts by herself? This developed from the evident intention of the Democrats in the new Congress to attempt general tariff revision as well as to adopt reciprocity. By late April the Liberals had passed definitely to the defensive and devoted most of their time to refuting the ever-louder Conservative assertions; furthermore, time was passing rapidly. The season for the Coronation and ensuing Imperial Conference approached, and presently a Conservative caucus decided to carry reciprocity to a bitter-end fight.<sup>33</sup> With this Conservative strategy began to be apparent—they would postpone decision until after the Coronation, and would then try to force the issue to the country. The parliamentary recess could be used to good advantage in fanning the flames of hostility already burning.

Away from Ottawa the propaganda mills had been turning apace. The February memorial of the Manufacturers' Association to the Prime Minister exhibited a tenderness for the farmer's welfare, allegedly endangered by reciprocity, matched only by American manufacturers' solicitude for the American farmer, also alleged to be facing ruin. This pushing forward of the farmer as the stalking horse of the protected interests was an outstanding as well as an adroit part of the campaign on both sides of the border. In neither case were manufacturers anxious to admit their own interest in preserving the tariff wall intact, though the files of *Industrial Canada* contain many articles openly deprecating any breach in the barrier. Boards of trade generally followed the lead of the manufacturers, though frequently adverse resolutions were adopted only after bitter internal struggles. Expressed sentiment of railroad leaders varied from Sir Donald Mann's belief that "no harm can come to our Canadian railways . . ." from reciprocity, to Sir William Van Horne's emergence from retirement in an effort "to bust the damned thing."<sup>34</sup> The evidence indicates that strong adverse railroad influence was brought to bear behind the scenes.

February and March saw the press campaign gather headway, mirror-

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 3566, 3578, 3648; III, 4020, 4185, 4432.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 3574-5, 3712-13, 3719; III, 3965-6, 3977, 4193.

<sup>32</sup>Montreal *Daily Witness*, March 28, 31; Toronto *Globe*, March 28; Halifax *Chronicle*, March 28-30; Toronto *Daily Star*, March 28, 29, 1911.

<sup>33</sup>Toronto *Globe*, Montreal *Star*, April 27, 1911.

<sup>34</sup>Mann quoted in Edmonton *Bulletin*, Feb. 9, 1911; Van Horne in Dafoe, *Sifton*, 364.



ing the parliamentary arguments. Hereafter the newspapers settled down for a time to reiteration, with Conservative organs occasionally discovering a new tack, which defenders veered to meet. As in Parliament, the Conservatives had the initiative, with Quebec and Ontario journals, particularly the *Montreal Star* and the *Toronto News* furnishing most of the ammunition; the stoutest pro-reciprocity fighter was the *Toronto Star*; the *Globe*, while active, was at first disinclined to a shirt-sleeves campaign. Declining during the Coronation season, the press drive revived rapidly during July to reach a crescendo in August and September. Opposition arguments first centred principally around the danger to national unity implicit in a reciprocity which would destroy the transportation bridge north of Lake Superior by turning western trade south to Chicago and the Twin Cities; stressed also were the threat to the imperial connection and the danger of annexation. In March the *Star* inaugurated a determined effort to prove reciprocity bad for the farmer; a widely-copied series of articles, described, in words and pictures, the deserted farms of New England; Canadians were pointedly asked if these farmers, so close to a supposedly hungry market, could not meet the competition of the American West, how could Canadians overcome a still greater transportation obstacle?<sup>35</sup> Again the *Star* launched (March 11) an argument designed to show how reciprocity would expose Canada to the hard times and unemployment said to be rampant in the United States. Two days later the *News* added a fear that the agreement would let the American trusts into Canada.

Liberal journals played up the argument that the agreement opened to Canadian producers a "Ninety Million Market."<sup>36</sup> The next most important supporting claim was that reciprocity would benefit both producer and consumer, an unfortunate effort which subjected Liberals to no little ridicule in the controversy's later stages.<sup>37</sup> Beyond these points, Liberal energies were mainly directed to refuting opposition sallies; this, in fact, became more and more the burden of the Liberal plea.

April saw a recurring appeal to annexation and the farm interest; Taft's unfortunate utterance of April 27 gave rise to a flurry of charge and counter-charge on annexation and the Empire. About this time, too, Conservatives began to emphasize a series of alleged scandals in the Liberal administrative record.<sup>38</sup> By the adjournment of Parliament the main outlines of the press campaign were evident—aside from the farmer's plight, matters of economic concern were to be soft-pedalled, it being the aim of opposition strategy to direct attention to more easily capitalized national, imperial, and political aspects. This strategy was possible because the opposition press seized and maintained the initiative, forcing reciprocity's defenders into a heart-breaking effort to overtake a strong front runner.

Laurier's decision to adjourn Parliament and go to London marked a turning point. Taken upon the advice of his Cabinet and against his own judgment that he should remain in Canada and fight reciprocity to a

<sup>35</sup>March 14, 22, 25, 1911.

<sup>36</sup>*Toronto Star*, Feb. 27; *Saint John Telegraph-Sun*, Feb. 24, 1911.

<sup>37</sup>*Toronto Star*, Feb. 10, 27, 1911.

<sup>38</sup>*Toronto News*, May 4, 18, 26; *Montreal Gazette*, April 19, 27, 29, May 3, 5, 6; *Edmonton Bulletin*, May 2; *Victoria Daily Colonist*, May 11, 1911.

conclusion, whether before Parliament or country,<sup>39</sup> the recess finally overcame the last vestiges of Liberal advantage so evident in January—surprise, prospective economic benefit, and entrenched power. The uncertain opposition, so hesitant in January, had been strengthened from powerful quarters, had profited by delay in the United States, and, after the recess took the offensive in Parliament and country to the point where it could enforce its demands for a popular verdict with the odds heavily in its favour.

His departure for London gave the Premier no respite from attack. The hostile press saw in adjournment evidence that the Prime Minister did not trust Fielding to manage debate on his own measure, and a quarrel between the two was intimated. Laurier's choice of an autonomist policy at the Imperial Conference allowed Conservative and Protestant to charge that he was trying to destroy the Empire at the behest of Quebec separatism.<sup>40</sup> Meantime Borden, on a western tour, was facing the Grain Growers, who pressed him hard on reciprocity, and were satisfied neither with his stout refusal to co-operate in this direction nor his equally stout promises along other lines.<sup>41</sup> The tour, however, gave him a chance to preach the national and imperial aspects of reciprocity and to de-emphasize its economic side. Though it made him little political capital, it showed the West and, more important, the East, what to expect from him, and gave him good experience in trying out his arguments before a hostile audience.

When Parliament reassembled on July 18, the Conservative strategy of obstruction was given full play until suddenly, on July 29, the Government stilled the repetition of old arguments by announcing an immediate dissolution with an election on September 21. The key to the bitter fight which followed is to be found in the Liberals' vain efforts to push reciprocity to the fore and in their opponents' more successful efforts (aided by left-handed allies in the French Nationalists), to drown it in a clamour of national and imperial interests allegedly more important. Both parties used the Eastern Provinces as sounding-boards for the leaders' oratory, leaving local campaigns in the hands of lieutenants. Laurier at first asserted valiantly that reciprocity was the sole issue, but ere long he abandoned this contention and introduced other matters into his addresses, particularly trying to lay the annexation spectre and to expose the "Unholy Alliance" between Borden and the French Nationalists. Toward the close of his tour he pointedly noted that the agreement treated the manufacturers kindly, and stressed again its great advantages to the farmer. Despite his stout front, he was obviously on the defensive, and privately began to have his doubts about the result as early as three weeks before the election.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup>This statement of Laurier's feelings about the Coronation trip was made to the writer by two members of his Government, George P. Graham and W. L. Mackenzie King.

<sup>40</sup>*Victoria Colonist*, May 5; *Montreal Gazette*, May 10, 11, 13; *Toronto News*, June 3, 8, 9, 10, 19; *Toronto Saturday Night*, June 17; *Sentinel*, June 15, July 27, 1911.

<sup>41</sup>The *Grain growers' guide* and the *Winnipeg Free Press* for June and July tell the story of Borden's travels.

<sup>42</sup>This brief summary of the Laurier campaign is based upon careful reading of his speeches as reported in the *Toronto Globe* and the account in *Canadian annual review, 1911*, 161-9. His misgivings about the ultimate result were based, he later told Arthur Hawkes, on the reports of his private barometer, commercial travellers (*Winnipeg Free Press*, Sept. 21, 1929).

Borden spent over a third of his speaking time in the superlatively important Ontario. Like Laurier, he devoted considerable attention to the agreement's economic aspects, but generally connected these with its national consequences in an effort to show that reciprocity would endanger Canadian commercial, fiscal, or political independence. Using the unfortunate parting-of-the-ways remark in almost every speech, Borden made Taft his lay-figure, to be stood up and knocked down for the benefit of Canadian audiences. These, along with a plea to preserve the Empire, some attention to alleged Liberal extravagance and corruption, and the necessary promises of the out-of-office, comprised the burden of his argument.<sup>43</sup> Next to the two leaders the most important speaker on either side was Clifford Sifton, whose trenchant criticisms of the agreement in many eastern industrial centres added to the influence he had already wielded as adviser to the opposition forces.<sup>44</sup>

The position of the Quebec Nationalists, led by Henri Bourassa and the fiery *Le Devoir*, was a matter of moment to both sides. Bourassa at first favoured the Laurier reciprocity.<sup>45</sup> The looming of a Dominion election complicated the Nationalist position. Quebec Conservatism, led by F. D. Monk, opposed Laurier and his reciprocity. Quebec Nationalism opposed Laurier's navy but not his reciprocity. To prevent this situation from creating three-cornered provincial contests which might result in the victory of Laurier men, a Monk-Bourassa arrangement produced Conservative candidates generally acceptable to the Nationalists.<sup>46</sup>

This working agreement gave the Liberals an opportunity to assert that Borden himself was allied with Bourassa, an accusation which he never formally denied. Solution of this problem lies beyond the scope of the present study; the possibility of the alliance alarmed much of the Liberal press to the point of hysteria and caused the Premier to spend over half of his campaigning time in Quebec; it injected the race and naval questions into the Quebec battle to such an extent that reciprocity became distinctly a minor issue there; it gave the Liberals a chance to assert that the Ontario Conservatives were financing the Quebec Nationalists and that while Borden was mouthing protestations of loyalty to the Empire in Ontario his Quebec allies were, in the *Toronto Globe's* words, "doing their treasonable utmost to inflame the minds of the French-Canadians against that very Imperial idea which Mr. Borden extols."<sup>47</sup>

The reader of the Canadian press is struck by the bewildering reiteration of old arguments and the paucity of new approaches to what was now definitely a political problem. One is almost tempted to agree with *The Sentinel's* (Toronto) editorial writer who greeted election day with this effusion:

A careful reading of the party papers leads to the conclusion that Mr. Borden will be returned to power with a majority of thirty for Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Nationalists holding the balance of power. This, of course, involves the defeat of the reciprocity pact, which will

<sup>43</sup>*Canadian annual review, 1911*, 169-79, covers his tour.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 196-9.

<sup>45</sup>He edited a series of articles from *Le Devoir* under dates Jan. 31-Feb. 7, 1911, under the title *The reciprocity agreement and its consequences from the Nationalist standpoint* (Montreal, 1911).

<sup>46</sup>Henri Bourassa, *The story of the Nationalist-Conservative alliance told by Henri Bourassa, the Nationalist leader* (Ottawa, 1914), 2-6.

<sup>47</sup>Aug. 19, 1911.

be put into effect as soon as Parliament meets, the United States already having adopted it.

This paradoxical situation will make Canada an ideal place to live, as the producer will get higher prices than before, while the consumer will get his goods for less money. Seeing that almost everybody in Canada is a producer of something, and seeing, too, that they are all consumers, it follows that everything a man has to sell will be higher and everything he has to buy will be cheaper.

The national song will be "Yankee Doodle's Maple Leaf," to be sung as a solo by your Uncle Samuel and Britannia [*sic*], who rules the waves.

Reiterated argument and phrase were dressed out in a tremendous variety of typographical pyrotechnics. Red ink, streamer headlines, cartoons, pictures of prominent deserters from each party on the reciprocity question, were all shaded by the Union Jack on front pages whence world news and the economic phases of reciprocity were pushed far into the background.

Liberal journals again had to devote much time to refutation; the principal positive arguments being their offer of the larger market to the producing classes, and the alleged Borden-Bourassa alliance.<sup>48</sup> When, toward the end of the campaign, it became evident that the single appeal to the farmer would not win the day, attention was turned to reassuring industry and labour. At the last minute a prominent United States argument that reciprocity would lower food costs to labour was pressed into service. Finally, it was urged that the agreement should have a trial before it was condemned—an argument seized upon by the opposition as a counsel of despair. The last few days found the Liberal press striving valiantly to keep to the main issue, but being forced more and more into channels fashioned by the other side.

Conservative press strategy, as earlier, was to obscure the reciprocity issue by appeal to indirect and largely irrelevant matters, many imported from the United States for the occasion. Imperial loyalty, Liberal scandals, and annexation, the manna called down from Heaven by Champ Clark, the Missouri Moses, were much to the fore. The producer, as in the United States, was warned of dire disaster to follow in reciprocity's wake. The Canadian worker was proffered American hard times—duty free; at the same time charges were bandied that American money was pouring in to influence the Canadian issue. In the last days the worker was told that his job was not safe, as alleged by the Liberals, but in grave jeopardy unless reciprocity were defeated. Another American import was publicized: William Randolph Hearst, who in May and June had turned all the pressure of his powerful influence behind Taft in the United States, was charged with insinuating himself into the Canadian election. September 18, too late for successful contradiction, widely scattered journals announced a Taft-Hearst scheme to deliver Canada to the United States.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup>This survey of press opinion is based upon reading of four files from Ontario, three from Quebec, and two each from Manitoba, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia. The Ottawa libraries had available but one file each (all pro-reciprocity) from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick. Space considerations preclude specific citations.

<sup>49</sup>"Was it for this," asked the *Toronto News*, "that the illustrious heroes of our British history fought their age-long battles, and freely gave their lives? Was the soil of England empurpled by a hundred wars to vouchsafe to succeeding generations

Thus Conservative initiative led Liberals off the point of reciprocity despite valiant efforts, dissipated their energies, and forced them to reply in kind to Conservative appeals to race and to emotion. The result was a campaign which in intensity and picturesqueness has had few rivals in North America.

The end result of the forces surveyed above was recorded in the astonishing overturn of September 21. The first opportunity for this overturn came when the matter was opened to political discussion. This gave, on both sides of the border, a chance for protected interests to influence political events for private ends. In Canada, United States delay, Liberal unwillingness to force the issue to a vote, American indiscretions, and the passage of time conspired to raise opposition hopes and depress defenders' chances. The contest found one party on the way up and the other on the way down, and accelerated a change in the nature of things inevitable, but made more quickly possible when the 1911 campaign on the reciprocity issue alienated important interests which in 1908 had supported the Prime Minister. Having forced matters to an election, opposition chances improved rapidly, since the political arena was large enough to introduce extraneous issues more likely to appeal to patriotism or to fear; thus an economic programme of some intrinsic merit became the football of a political campaign in which the opposition won by an essentially simple tactic—of saying "No" to reciprocity and "Yes" to the British connection. Out of the whole episode Canada approached nationhood, under the British flag, and launched upon a period of high protection. This last result was the end sought by those whose agents filled the Dominion from ocean to ocean with propaganda.

Farmer, loyalty, imperialism, all meant one thing to the groups which used all these pleas to avert a danger which knows no national boundaries—the danger to a self-interest well-developed and long-entrenched. Any analysis of the reciprocity episode which stops with the explanation that the American farmer opposed reciprocity, and that it was defeated in Canada because of the annexation-loyalty cries, misses the fundamental factor involved; the farmer may have been opposed, and the average Canadian may have feared the United States, but this opposition and these fears were assiduously cultivated, if not implanted, by interests motivated by a common fear of the consequences of lower tariffs.<sup>50</sup>

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#### DISCUSSION

Mr. Creighton suggested that the propaganda of vested interests was not entirely responsible for the rejection of reciprocity. Canada had, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, achieved a measure of economic integration which was new in her history. This integration was based upon the large-scale production of wheat in Western Canada and its

the right of the subject to the untrammelled ballot, only to have this priceless heritage torn from our grasp by the greedy magnates and the designing demagogues of the United States?"

<sup>50</sup>Manuscript of author's *Reciprocity, 1911: A study in Canadian-American relations*, now in press.

export, via the east-west transport system, to Great Britain. Successful Canadian economic nationalism was thus linked with Empire trade; and this helps to explain the association of nationalist and imperialist cries in the reciprocity campaign.

Mr. Landon recalled some of his impressions as a parliamentary correspondent in the last years of the Laurier ministry. It appeared clear at that time that, while the Liberals were declining in vigorous leadership and party spirit, the Conservatives were gaining energetic adherents and acquiring a large measure of confidence. Mr. Landon thought that these personal and party elements should not be forgotten in any analysis of the defeat of 1911.

Mr. Kyte recalled the attitude of the British press and people to the reciprocity campaign. Reciprocity had been at first regarded in Great Britain as a purely domestic Canadian issue; and the country was surprised and gratified at the amount of imperial sentiment which was revealed in Canada during the campaign.

Mr. Innis suggested that any relationship between Canada and the United States, into which dangerous political implications could be read, was certain of an unfavourable reception in the Dominion; and he cited the C.I.O. controversy as another illustration of the forces at work in the reciprocity campaign. He thought that the position of Canadian lumber and the changing commercial strategy of Canadian lumbermen were partly responsible for the reversal of opinion in respect of reciprocity.

Miss Foster emphasized again the importance of the east-west transport system in determining the attitude of Canadians to the reciprocity agreement. She pointed out that a number of the confidential letters on the subject of reciprocity, which were sent by the Liberal M.P.'s to Mr. Fielding during the summer of 1910, had stressed the necessity of protecting the interests of the Canadian transcontinental railway system. She suggested also that the memorials presented by the farmers to Sir Wilfrid Laurier during his western tour in 1910 did not appear to indicate that reciprocity was the all-important issue for the West. In reality, the farmers appeared more interested in various extensions of public ownership; but Sir Wilfrid, opposed in principle to public ownership, probably hoped that reciprocity alone would be sufficient to conciliate them.