

ADVANCE · PRAISE · FOR

THE PRESIDENTS AND THE PRIME MINISTERS

"Lawrence Martin has done the impossible. He has made Canada-U.S. relations interesting. He eavesdrops on conversations between the presidents and the prime ministers, opens their mail, and records key memoranda from their advisors. Here are all of the juicy anecdotes of a complex and at times tempestuous relationship recounted in lively journalistic style."

*Vivian Nelles,
Mackenzie King Visiting Professor,
Harvard University (1981-1982)*

"Lively history, movie-sharp portraits, and gripping anecdotes about the men who have made the world's longest undefended border almost indefensible."

Keith Spicer, Author/Columnist

"How have the elephant and the mouse survived this long in bed? Surprisingly, Lawrence Martin gives us the first popular look at the Canada-U.S. connection. The mouse still quivers. He fears sexual assault!"

Allan Fotheringham, National Columnist

LAWRENCE
MARTIN

THE PRESIDENTS AND THE PRIME MINISTERS

DOUBLEDAY

THE PRESIDENTS AND THE PRIME MINISTERS



*Washington and Ottawa Face to Face:
The Myth of Bilateral Bliss
1867-1982*

LAWRENCE MARTIN

LAWRENCE MARTIN

The Presidents and the Prime Ministers

Washington and Ottawa Face to Face:
The Myth of Bilateral Bliss
1867-1982

1982
DOUBLEDAY CANADA LIMITED
Toronto, Ontario
DOUBLEDAY & COMPANY, INC.
Garden City, New York

CONTENTS

1 / 'A Little More than Kin and Less than Kind'	1
2 / The First Findings: John A. Macdonald and Ulysses S. Grant	22
3 / Games Presidents Play: Grant, Hayes, Arthur, Cleveland, and Harrison	33
4 / "I'm going to be ugly": Tempestuous Teddy and Wilfrid Laurier	51
5 / The Missing Tact of President Taft	68
6 / Borden and the Fight for Recognition	82
7 / The Last Voyage of Warren Harding	93
8 / Hoover Wagons, Bennett Buggies	101
9 / The Best Bilateral Years: Franklin Roosevelt and Mackenzie King	113
10 / Life with Harry	147
11 / Country Cousins: Ike and Uncle Louis	166
12 / The Diefenbaker-Kennedy Schism	181
13 / 'Burlesque Circus': LBJ and Lester Pearson	212
14 / Nixon and Trudeau: Ending Something Special	236
15 / Jimmy Carter and Shattered Expectations	262
16 / Moving Backward	277
Notes	286
Index	293

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Presidents and the Prime Ministers was born one Washington night when sleep wouldn't come and thoughts stirred as to how to make the important subject of Canada-U.S. relations interesting to the general reader. The result was a decision to tell the story in the context of the leaders of the countries, thereby bringing some flesh and blood to a subject which can be intimidatingly dry. Because the focus is frequently more on the personalities than the issues, the book should not be viewed as a comprehensive study of bilateral relations. Since 115 years of history are covered in a relatively short space, the treatment in some areas is necessarily general and sweeping. Any resulting errors in interpretation or detail are the sole responsibility of the author. In keeping with the general-interest nature of the work, the number of footnotes have been limited. Frequently sources are indicated in the text itself. In important cases where they aren't, footnotes are used, provided that the people interviewed did not object to being cited.

The book is a product of the assistance and thoughtfulness of many. Special gratitude is owed to Richard Doyle, editor-in-chief of the *Globe and Mail*. Mr. Doyle made the work possible in two ways, first by having the faith in my ability to appoint me Washington correspondent of the paper, second by granting a year's leave of absence to complete the book. No one is more important in the making of a book than one's editor and at Doubleday I had a gem in Janet Turnbull. Too wise to be so young, Miss Turnbull's intelligence, judgment, considerateness, and insight make one feel very secure about the future of Canadian publishing.

The Canada Council helped make the venture financially feasible and is due many thanks. Roger Swanson provided helpful advice and his work, *Canadian-American Summit Diplomacy, 1923-1973*, is an indispensable collection of speeches and notes to anyone doing work on the subject. In the summer of 1981, Marshall Auerback, now a law student at Oxford, did some diligent research in the Canadian Public Archives. My thanks to him and to the helpful staff at the Archives, particularly Ian McClymont. The staff at the Canadian Embassy Library in Washington was most cooperative as were the people at every presidential library in the United States and at the Library of Congress in Washington. Thanks also to those who read the manuscript in advance and offered comments, to the many who granted their time for long interviews, to Washington colleagues Jean Pelletier and John Honderich, to Rick Archbold, to Anthony Westell, to the many at the *Globe and Mail* who offered advice and support, to the Cronkhite gang at Harvard who offered companionship and comic relief, and to Dermot Nolan and William Crandall for their good counsel, for their unwavering friendship, and, in keeping with the spirit of the Rogues, for their abiding dedication to the banishment of boredom. Finally my gratitude to the closest people: my parents, always with me, my brothers, especially Ian Martin who along with his wife Sandy proofread the manuscript, my sister, my precious daughter Katie, and Maureen Cussion Martin who, in the early days, with a force of conviction which only she can muster, rescued the book from oblivion.

Cambridge, Massachusetts

June 20, 1982

THE PRESIDENTS AND THE PRIME MINISTERS (1867-1982)

Andrew Johnson 1865-1869	John A. Macdonald 1867-1873
Ulysses Grant 1869-1877	Alexander Mackenzie 1873-1878
Rutherford Hayes 1877-1881	John A. Macdonald 1878-1891
James Garfield 1881	John Abbott 1891-1892
Chester Arthur 1881-1885	John Thompson 1892-1894
Grover Cleveland 1885-1889	Mackenzie Bowell 1894-1896
Benjamin Harrison 1889-1893	Charles Tupper 1896
Grover Cleveland 1893-1897	Wilfrid Laurier 1896-1911
William McKinley 1897-1901	Robert Borden 1911-1920
Theodore Roosevelt 1901-1909	Arthur Meighen 1920-1921
William Taft 1909-1913	Mackenzie King 1921-1926
Woodrow Wilson 1913-1921	Arthur Meighen 1926
Warren Harding 1921-1923	Mackenzie King 1926-1930
Calvin Coolidge 1923-1929	R.B. Bennett 1930-1935
Herbert Hoover 1929-1933	Mackenzie King 1935-1948
Franklin Roosevelt 1933-1945	Louis St. Laurent 1948-1957
Harry Truman 1945-1953	John Diefenbaker 1957-1963
Dwight Eisenhower 1953-1961	Lester Pearson 1963-1968
John Kennedy 1961-1963	Pierre Trudeau 1968-1979
Lyndon Johnson 1963-1969	Joe Clark 1979-1980
Richard Nixon 1969-1974	Pierre Trudeau 1980-
Gerald Ford 1974-1977	
Jimmy Carter 1977-1981	
Ronald Reagan 1981-	

CHAPTER ONE

'A Little More than Kin and Less than Kind'

PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON failed to appear at the helicopter landing area for Lester Pearson's arrival at Camp David. Like pallbearers, two advisers, who showed up in his place, escorted the uneasy Canadian prime minister to their master's cabin. Johnson greeted Pearson civilly there, but unmasked a truer disposition at the sound of newsmen's cameras clicking behind him. He turned to press secretary George Reedy. "Get those bastards out of here!"

At the lunch table, silence dominated. The president drank one bloody mary instead of his usual two or three. Distant, glowering, he ordered a telephone to his side and called bureaucrats to discuss matters of no urgency. Pearson picked gingerly at his food and, for lack of more engaging enterprise, talked to Lady Bird about his helicopter flight. He knew the reason for his host's foul nature. In a speech in Philadelphia the previous evening, April 2, 1965, Pearson had denounced Johnson's decision to begin Operation Rolling Thunder—the bombing of North Vietnam. Coming from a friend and ally like Pearson, the dissent angered Johnson. Coming in the United States, "my own backyard," it enraged him.

As the luncheon dragged mercilessly on, Pearson finally chose to throw the raw meat on the table. "Well," he offered daintily, "what did you think of my speech?" LBJ's growl was audible. "Awwwful." He stretched his large hand across the table, clutched the prime

minister by the upper arm, and led him on to the terrace where there was room for wrath. Striding the porch, his arms sawing the air, his sulphurous vocabulary contaminating it, Johnson ripped into Pearson full-voltage. The prime minister had betrayed the president. He had joined the ranks of ignorant liberals, "those know-nothing do-gooders," like "Walter Lippmann."

"Okay, you don't want us there [Vietnam], we can clear out, really clear out and then see what happens." Johnson was livid at the insinuation of Pearson and others that he was hawkish. The Pentagon, he stormed, had been advising him for weeks to fry the enemy area with nuclear weapons. But he had resisted. "Not bad for a warmonger!"

Inside, the houseguests minced uncomfortably around the dining-room table, not catching all the defamation, but guaranteed a resounding "Horseshit!" from the president about every three minutes. For more than an hour he tore on until ultimately, in a piece of bilateral diplomacy knowing no equal, he moved beyond the realm of words. Having pinned the much smaller Pearson against the railing, the president of the United States grabbed him by the shirt collar, twisted it and lifted the shaken prime minister by the neck. The verbal abuse continued in a venomous torrent. "You pissed on my rug!" he thundered.

Charles Ritchie, the distinguished Canadian ambassador, was looking through the window, aghast. Jack Valenti, a Johnson aide, assured him that the president would soon calm down, and at last the noise abated. The two leaders moved inside where Pearson, having rearranged himself, was able to move the discussion topic away from his Vietnam speech and thus restore LBJ's decibel range to human levels.¹

Then it was time to meet the press, time to let the world in on the developments of the day. First up was President Johnson. "We had a general discussion," he said. "A friendly one." Pearson was next: "I haven't much to say except that it has been a very pleasant couple of hours and I am grateful to the President for giving me the chance to come to Camp David."

The newsmen, not entirely oblivious to the smoke billowing from each man's head, were suspicious. They chased spokesmen for more details but, particularly in the Canadian case, were less than successful. Among the many papers which were misled was the *Globe and Mail*.

The headline for its half-page feature story declared: "Lester and Lyndon: A Unique Friendship." The subtitle read: "Nowhere Else are There Two Leaders Who Enjoy Such an Easy Relationship." Bruce Macdonald, the paper's Washington correspondent, was the reporter victimized by Lester Pearson and his flacks. "There appears to have been a complete absence of rancor," Macdonald waxed. "According to Canadian authorities this latest round of talks with the President was the most effective and rewarding they have undertaken... The two men get along extremely well together."

Canadians went to bed that night satisfied, as usual, that all was well with the president and the prime minister, and that all was well with the Canada-U.S. relationship. In the prime minister's office there was relief and not a wholesale rush to amend the mistaken media reports. It was absolutely mandatory that the real story not get out. If it did, if Canadians discovered that the president had physically manhandled their prime minister, if they found out that their prime minister had been treated like the leader of one of the Soviet Union's eastern satellites, the damage to the bilateral bliss would be enormous. Irreparable.

The Ottawa press gallery was in repose, but soon Dick O'Hagan, Pearson's press secretary, was edgy. In the other capital, reports were suggesting that Camp David had not been a "very pleasant couple of hours." White House officials, to O'Hagan's regret, hadn't remained fully silent. On the same day of the flogging the president himself had met an Israeli diplomat and boastfully provided a graphic account. The diplomat, outfitted with choice Oval Office gossip, told others and the word spread.

The White House reporters hadn't uncovered the most vivid details—the fact that the president had picked up the prime minister by the scruff of the neck. They might have, had they shown more interest. But in this respect, O'Hagan had history on his side. In Washington, Canada was usually about as hot a news topic as Borneo. By 1980, the *Wall Street Journal* could still report that Canada had twelve provinces, two more than uncovered in the previous Canadian census. But on the Camp David story the American reporters did reveal that Johnson had strongly reprimanded Pearson for his Vietnam speech and this was enough to stir Canadian newspapermen. Having seen the U.S. reports, they came after O'Hagan. Macdonald, an accomplished professional, was burning. George Bain, also of the

Globe and Mail, and Arch Mackenzie of the Canadian Press, smelled a double cross.

O'Hagan, a consummate public relations man who would earn a top reputation, threw up a time-buying barricade and embarked on a campaign to refute the Washington stories. His misinformation effort was made easier in that Pearson hadn't given him all the details. O'Hagan knew it had been a profanity-infested clash but even he didn't know it had reached physical proportions.² It was also made easier by the availability of someone he considered an easy target among Canadian newsmen—Bruce Phillips, who was later to become one of Canada's best TV reporters. O'Hagan felt Phillips was a sucker for anti-American bait. He threw out the line, Phillips jumped like O'Hagan hoped he would, and the press secretary gloated. In a 2,500-word memorandum to Pearson he outlined his manipulation efforts:

"I also called Bruce Phillips and gave him a run-down from our standpoint. I did this because of his tendency to take an anti-U.S. position on the slightest justification and I wanted, if at all possible, to forestall what appeared to me to be a developing American propaganda line." In brackets, he added, "I was successful in this, rather to his [Phillips'] subsequent chagrin."

O'Hagan put the squeeze on Arch Mackenzie: "The next major development of note, was the publication of the Evans-Novak column. I then undertook to beat down the effects of that, and again I met with some success. You will recall that External Affairs was aroused because of the dispatch of a story from Washington from a Canadian correspondent there—Arch Mackenzie. There were a number of relatively minor facts in error which gave me an excuse to telephone Mackenzie. I talked to the ambassador about this and advocated he see Mackenzie.... At any rate Mackenzie was clearly disturbed, not knowing who to believe."

But O'Hagan didn't like the cover-up business, the idea that the reporters and the public were being geared. Showing a measure of integrity not prevalent in his business, he informed the prime minister in the same extraordinary memo that he should have been appraised of all the Camp David details, that he wanted more candour from Pearson, and that reporters deserved more candour: "I don't think we can indulge in any semantic footwork in a matter as serious as this; in other words I think I should be in a position to say something clearly to

a man like Bain, even if it is to be an interpretation of something that may have been said... I think we now have to face the reality that Mackenzie, Macdonald and all the others who were professionally implicated in this affair would subscribe to Bain's proposition that consciously or not what I and other Canadian spokesmen said had the effect of playing down the idea of a disagreement and that it amounted to a 'steer in the opposite direction.'"³

The real Camp David story reached only some Liberal caucus members and senior public servants, among them Ed Ritchie, number two in command at External Affairs (no relation to Charles). Today the memory of Johnson's actions still rankles. "If I'd have been there I think I would have cuffed him," said Ritchie.⁴ He and his colleagues couldn't imagine Johnson doing the same to Charles de Gaulle—nor to any other foreign leader.

For the rest of the Canadian population, a decade would pass until some of the particulars of the story began to emerge. O'Hagan's steer in the opposite direction, whatever his regrets, worked. It produced a steered Canadian public. In the context of the relationships between the presidents and the prime ministers, and in the context of bilateral relations generally, it produced, in other words, something not terribly unique.

The U.S. presidents and the Canadian prime ministers would meet more than eighty times, more times than the presidents would meet with any other foreign leaders, with the possible exception of the British. Virtually all of the meetings, according to the public pronouncements, would be splendid successes. The two leaders would smile after their pleasant couple of hours and expound on the accomplishments. Sometimes a "new era of consultation" would be born and it would be followed in the near future by another "new era of consultation." During each era, the Canada-U.S. discussions would always be "open and frank," and if they had that open and frank quality, there would be an excellent chance that a "great rapport" would be established. The great rapport in turn would often lead to another "historic agreement," serving to keep the "undefended border" undefended.

In the words of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and many other observers, the Canada-U.S. relationship would come to be "the standard for enlightened international relations." It would be the yardstick by which all other countries were to measure their relations

and their behaviour with other countries. Because of this, because of the exalted image of the Canada-U.S. "special relationship," it became very important that the image be upheld, even in the trying times when the president was having the prime minister's shirt for dessert. It became so important that in the same year as Pearson's visit to Camp David a report on the bilateral relationship was released recommending that Canada-U.S. disputes be kept out of the public eye, that in effect, they be covered up. Authored by Livingston Merchant and Arnold Heeney, former ambassadors to Ottawa and Washington respectively, the report spawned considerable incredulity, being viewed as an underhanded way of preserving the "special relationship" — even if one didn't exist. That it was written by two esteemed diplomats, the calibre of Merchant and Heeney, was double cause for consternation.

But Merchant and Heeney had just experienced John Diefenbaker and John Kennedy. They knew what the relations between the presidents and the prime ministers were sometimes like. They knew that in order to help maintain harmony on the continent, in order to maintain the lustrous world image of the Canada-U.S. relationship, such a formula was probably needed.

In early 1963, the Kennedy administration had issued a press release, that did to Diefenbaker on paper what Johnson did to Pearson on the porch. It brazenly contradicted the prime minister's declarations on Canadian defence issues and on the question of nuclear weapons for NATO allies. To Arthur Krock of the *New York Times*, the press release was "one of the most hamhanded, ill-conceived and undiplomatic employments in the record of U.S. diplomacy." To the Diefenbaker government, it was calamitous. Shortly after its release, the Tories lost a non-confidence motion based largely on bungled U.S. relations and, with Diefenbaker alleging a White House plot to sack him, were tossed out in the ensuing election.

A controversy followed as to the exact role the Kennedy White House, in its "special relationship" with Canada, had played in the outcome, a Quebec lawyer named Pierre Trudeau siding with Diefenbaker's views of American interference. One of the key figures in the press release drama was McGeorge Bundy, a national security adviser to both Kennedy and Johnson. Bundy, one of the men who escorted Pearson to Johnson at Camp David, gave White House authorization for the press release. He had done it hurriedly because, as usual, there were always more important matters to see to than Canada. But after

viewing its ramifications, he felt somewhat guilty. The feeling persisted into the Johnson administration, and one day he wrote a memorandum to the president which contained a suggestion that it would perhaps be a good idea to be nicer to Canadians. His memo would have interested Diefenbaker in particular. Had he seen it before he died, the stormy Tory might have felt a little better, just a little more vindicated about his accusations in the early 1960s regarding White House interference.

"I might add," Bundy wrote Johnson, "that I myself have been sensitive to the need for being extra polite to Canadians ever since George Ball and I knocked over the Diefenbaker Government by one incautious press release."⁵

The knocking over of Diefenbaker and the knocking over of Pearson, although among the low points in the history of the presidents and the prime ministers, were not entirely unrepresentative. Much of the Canada-U.S. imagery presented to the rest of the world has been little more than imagery, little more than a reflection of the candy-coating called for in the Merchant-Heeney report, and embodied in the LBJ-Pearson press conference.

Beyond the facade of the world's greatest country-to-country relationship, are preoccupied presidents who don't know about Canada, who don't have the time or inclination to care about Canada, and who presume that Canada is on the leash forever. Beyond the facade are prime ministers who, reflecting a nationalistic need of their people to 'jeer at the man across the border' have been obstreperous and sometimes peevish in their dealings with the White House; prime ministers who became exasperated with Oval Office oversight and satellite treatment and ultimately began looking for somewhere else to turn.

Most important, beyond the facade of the "special relationship" are two countries bound by geographic and economic necessity but losing the tie that really binds — the tie of spirit. The spirit of the continental relationship is primarily the responsibility of the presidents and the prime ministers. They set the guiding tone, the leading temperament. If there is genuine warmth and harmony between them, there is usually the same between the countries.

In the bilateral context the responsibility falls somewhat heavily on the president, for he is the player who carries the weight. He is the leader who, much more than the prime minister, can make things happen.

Following his stint as U.S. ambassador to Canada in the late 1970s

Kenneth Curtis, a former governor of Maine, said somewhat sadly that, to his knowledge, no American president had ever taken time to work on the Canadian relationship.⁶ In fairness to the chief executives, he was slightly incorrect. Since Canadian confederation there have been twenty-three presidents and twenty-two have not worked to any appreciable degree on the Canadian relationship. The one exception was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He and Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King fashioned the one period in Canada-U.S. history when the relationship was truly shining: 1935 to 1945. In the other years, in the other 105 years since the birth of Canada, the relationship has hardly been special. There have been some good years, notably the fifteen following FDR, and there have been flashes of promise for great years. But no other president could sustain an interest in the country like Roosevelt.

FDR was a gem for Canada. He loved the land. His family owned a summer home at Campobello, New Brunswick, and young Franklin spent his summers there fishing, boating, golfing, and learning about the country and its people. It was in the waters beside his Canadian cottage that he contracted polio. The disease crippled him at the age of thirty-nine, in the prime of his life, and the memory of that tragedy would keep him away from his beloved island for more than a decade. But the memory wouldn't stain his regard for the northern country whose vastness and potential captivated him. In office, he visited Canada more times than any other president, he had the prime ministers to Washington more than any other, and he kept the prime ministers more informed of major developments. He accorded Canada and its leader the treatment of a major power. He came to know Canadians and Canadian issues. Roosevelt could name members of Canadian cabinets, a feat unheard of for presidents. He had a lasting concern for the Quebec problem, and while World War II raged, he sat down one day and wrote a long letter to Mackenzie King on his conceptions of it, giving the prime minister advice on how the French could be more easily assimilated.

The skeptics would suggest that Roosevelt was seeking to use King and Canada to his own selfish ends. There is likely some truth in what they say as there is likely some truth in ascribing selfish motivations to the actions of any world leader. But whatever his purpose, the end result was that the Roosevelt-King years were the ones when the bilateral clichés took on real meaning, when milestone trade and defence agreements helped get the countries healthy through the

war, and when Canada and the United States did set the "standard for enlightened international relations." During this period, Franklin Roosevelt, sensing it all, would write King and say of himself: "Sometimes I indulge in the thoroughly sanctimonious and pharisaical thought, which I hope that you are occasionally guilty of, that it is a grand and glorious thing for Canada and the United States to have the team of Mackenzie and Roosevelt at the helm in days like these."

Because of its impressive performance in World War II and in the organization of NATO and the United Nations, and because so many other countries were war-ravaged, Canada became a more powerful world force in the post-Roosevelt period. But the ingredients in FDR's success with Canada—knowledge, interest, respect—were not to be found to the same degree or even close to the same degree in the succeeding presidents. The perception took hold again among Canadians that White House deliberations in respect to their country were made while the presidents were sleepwalking. Pearson was most struck by the ignorance of Dwight Eisenhower about Canada. After one trip to the White House, he came out shaking his head, stunned that Ike, the golfing president, hadn't heard of a particular Canadian concern: "You'd think his caddy would have mentioned it to him."

Canadian officials have two favourite phrases to describe the Washington attitude to their country: "taken for granted," and "benign neglect." Most U.S. officials grant there is some truth to both. Generally Americans see Canada as a powerless, fifty-first-state type of neighbour, a thin band of cities and towns stretching along the edge of the border, hugging the United States in suitably satellite style.

There is no recognition in the White House or among Americans generally that Canada, as Pearson and Livingston Merchant argued, has become the most important country to the United States in the noncommunist world. Economically there is no argument as no other nation is in the same league as Canada in significance. By a vast margin it is the United States' largest trading partner. In terms of strategic value, the other most important criteria, the United States could less afford to lose Canada as an ally than any other country. West Germany and Britain make far more important military contributions to NATO than Canada, but their strategic locations do not equal in importance for the Americans the giant land mass that separates the United States from the USSR.

Most of the presidents have either been unaware of Canada's

importance, as when Richard Nixon said that Japan was his largest trading partner, or have chosen to ignore it. Franklin Roosevelt's concern and understanding have been displaced in large part by disinterest and ignorance. Not disinterest and ignorance with respect to the bilateral issues, but in areas somewhat more basic to the relationship. With the presidents and their relations with the prime ministers it is first necessary to start with what has been among the highest of the hurdles — knowing the prime ministers' names.

From the overall perspective, it should be understood initially that it has not been the American way to achieve erudition in other ways besides the American way. Essentially an isolationist country from its birth in 1776 until 1940, there was never as compelling a need for Americans to address international questions as there was for other countries. This deficiency, on occasion, has had a way of manifesting itself. At Harvard University, a story is told about an opinion sampling taken in Cincinnati, Ohio. The respondents were asked in a multiple choice format to identify names by circling the appropriate corresponding word or phrase. In identifying U Thant, secretary general of the United Nations, there was some difficulty. Many Americans chose "submarine."

As for the presidents themselves, they were late arrivals internationally. The first twenty-four presidents never set foot outside of the United States. Teddy Roosevelt finally broke the tradition, travelling to Panama in 1906, and Woodrow Wilson became the first president to travel overseas, going to the Paris Peace Conference after World War I — 142 years into the country's history. But in itself, the history of detachment can hardly explain the difficulties the chief executives have encountered with some of the more rudimentary aspects of the Canadian scene.

President Harry Truman called a press conference in January 1949 to announce, among other things, that he had a visitor coming from Canada. He delivered a short two-paragraph statement in which he alluded to the prime minister of Canada five times without mentioning his name. Finally Tony Vaccaro, an Associated Press reporter, interrupted. "For bulletin purposes, sir," he said half-jokingly, "what's his name?" "I was very carefully trying to avoid it," said Truman, "because I don't know how to pronounce it." Then he tried: "Louis St. Laurent — L-a-u-r-e-n-t. I don't know how to pronounce it. That's a French pronunciation. I wouldn't attempt to pronounce it. Tony, you put me on the spot." "I was myself on the spot," said Vaccaro.

Given the state of the post-war world, St. Laurent's Canada was the world's fourth largest power. A dignified gentleman, he did not fancy his name being so obscure. Soon he received a letter from one William Wilson of a Philadelphia radio station:

"Dear Mr. Prime Minister... I think there is no one better acquainted with how your name should be pronounced than you. Will you be kind enough to break your name down syllabically, displaying the proper accent. In order to facilitate the interpretation please think of some English name or word which rhymes with your name... Thank you very much for your attention. You may enter your outline in the spaces provided below."

Pearson's suspicions about Eisenhower were borne out during a visit in 1960 by Diefenbaker to the White House. "Every member of this company," said the president, "feels a very definite sense of honor and distinction in the privilege of having with us tonight the Prime Minister of the Great Republic of Canada." Having their country referred to as a Republic was disillusioning to the Canadian guests, but if any of the White House officials noticed the gaffe, they didn't tell Ike. He did it again on the same visit.

Diefenbaker had served three years as prime minister by the time John Kennedy became president yet Kennedy still had not heard the prime minister's name enough to be able to pronounce it properly. To avoid a Truman-style embarrassment, he asked Secretary of State Dean Rusk to check it out. Rusk took the problem to a department official of German origin and reported promptly that the correct pronunciation was "Diefenbawker." The president told a press conference that he would be delighted to be welcoming Prime Minister "Diefenbawker" to the White House. Diefenbaker, burdened by the incredible size of his ego throughout his tempestuous tenure, was astounded. The Kennedy slip marked a frightful beginning to a disastrous relationship. It was also a sorry start to the Kennedy-Rusk relationship. Recalled Rusk, "Kennedy was furious with me."⁷

When President Johnson wasn't blaspheming Pearson with names, he was getting his name wrong. Welcoming the Nobel Prize-winning prime minister to his Texas home before a cluster of TV cameras, Johnson announced that it was great to have "Mr. Wilson" there and that he was about to take Wilson on a tour of the ranch.

Johnson's brass extended to his bodyguards. On a visit to Canada in 1967, the Johnson entourage moved *en masse* into Pearson's cottage residence at Harrington Lake. After the talks broke off one evening,

Pearson started toward his washroom and was confronted by a broad-shouldered Johnson guard standing in the hallway. "Who are you and where are you going?" he demanded. Pearson looked up at his chin. "I'm the Prime Minister of Canada, I live here and I'm about to go and have a leak."

Richard Nixon's difficulty wasn't so much in remembering the name Trudeau as it was in the adjectives he sometimes selected to bestow on it, one being "asshole."

Although presidents addressed the Canadian Parliament as early as FDR's day, Trudeau was the first Canadian prime minister to speak before the Congress. He was quickly baptized into the world of congressional enlightenment that day when, after his oration, congressman Clement Zablocki of Wisconsin appraised it: "Some members of Congress didn't think a Canadian could speak such good English."

The isolated occurrences, though not a fair reflection of the overall treatment, indicate some of the effrontery Canadians have endured at the hands of Americans. Ulysses Grant began the Canada-U.S. relationship rather inauspiciously when, shortly after Confederation, he started vying to absorb the new Canada. He wanted it in time for his re-election bid in 1872. His plan was to work out a deal with the British, who owed the United States compensation for damages inflicted by the *Alabama*, a boat built in British yards for use by the south in the Civil War. Grant's pitch? Press the British to cede Canada in exchange for the damages caused by the boat.⁸ It was an early-day American example of linkage.

Rutherford B. Hayes bubbled with the prospect of gaining Canada, Grover Cleveland ordered a boycott against all goods from the country, and Teddy Roosevelt considered it a shame that Canada wasn't part of the Union—a shame for Canadians more than for Americans. Particularly enchanted with the Canadian west, he wrote that it "should lie wholly within our limits... less for our sake than for the sake of the men who lie along their banks." As Americans, these people "would hold positions incomparably more important, grander and more dignified than they can ever hope to reach."

As Roosevelt's successor, William Taft discovered in an embarrassing way that, despite Teddy's magnanimity, Canadians preferred to lie along their own banks, however shabby. Taft pushed for a free-trade agreement with Canada, publicly proclaiming that it was not a step

toward annexation, while privately writing that it could be. Canadians, ever suspicious of the intent of presidents, sided with his private view; defeating the proposal and dealing a president one of the most costly blows ever rendered by Canada.

The Taft presidency closed the first of four distinguishable periods in the Oval Office-Ottawa relations. The first, from 1867 to 1911, was the period of the annexationist presidents and the powerless prime ministers. The ten presidents of the period, eight of whom were Republicans, were not blatantly bent on taking over Canada, but it was the privately expressed wish of most and the policy of a few. Not until a pressured Taft formally renounced northern territorial ambitions could Canadians—those who didn't want to be annexed—cast off such fears. Canadian foreign policy through this period was ultimately controlled by London, a source of acute aggravation for the prime ministers in dealing with the White House.

The second period, from 1911 to 1932, was the age of aloof and indifferent presidents. Although Canada threw off its British bondage in this time, and although it gained control of its foreign policy in Washington, and gained world respect as a separate entity with its war performance, the presidents showed less interest in Canada in this era than in the first, when the prospect of annexation had danced in their dreams.

Calvin Coolidge typified for Canada the sleepwalker breed of president in these two decades. "Cool Cal" once made the remark: "When people are out of work, unemployment results." On Canada he held views of comparable depth. One of his few statements on the country in his files showed him wondering, though born in the border state of Vermont, whether Toronto was near a lake.

Woodrow Wilson and Herbert Hoover were only slightly more interested. But an exception in this period was Warren Harding, the Ohio Republican who became the first sitting president to visit Canada officially when he stopped off in Vancouver, British Columbia on his way back from Alaska in 1923. The Canadian reception was glorious, and surprisingly emotional, matching that usually accorded a member of the royal family. Harding, a handsome president, his voice sonorous and comforting, responded with what still ranks as the most beautiful of speeches made by presidents in Canada. But the splendour of his day blackened as his hidden health problems chose Vancouver to unveil themselves. He fell ill while playing golf with his

Canadian hosts, cut short his round, and returned to his hotel suite for rest. Doing his best to camouflage exhaustion, doing his best to thank a city that had displayed deep admiration, he completed his public duties for the day. Then he sailed out of a dark Vancouver harbour, never to make it back to Washington alive.

With the Harding visit a trend indicating the “who’s who” of the relationship began. Canadian prime ministers would visit the presidents close to four times for every once the presidents would reciprocate. The U.S. leaders’ appearances in Canada would usually come when they were nearing, or in, election campaigns, Canada being considered a good publicity trip.

The “special relationship” was such that the first visit by a prime minister to Washington was in 1871, and the first visit by a president to the Canadian capital of Ottawa was seventy-two years later, in 1943. Franklin Roosevelt was the guest. Shattering the tradition of detachment, he saw King on nineteen separate occasions, leaving his wife, Eleanor, to puzzle over what interested him in the Canadian she considered boring. Roosevelt ushered in the good-neighbour era of Canada-U.S. relations, a period which, though declining with his successors, lasted roughly from 1933 to 1959. Following FDR’s death in 1945, there was ominous speculation in Ottawa over his replacement, the governor-general telling Prime Minister King that Harry Truman was a “crook.” But King warned to Truman, and the Truman administration warmed to King, so much so that it pushed for a free-trade plan that revived annexationist fears in the prime minister.

In 1952, following two decades of Democrats, Eisenhower brought the Republicans back to the White House. The Republicans were the party of least favour in Canada and would remain so. The party and its presidents had been more annexationist than the Democrats. They introduced high protective tariffs which shut out Canadian manufacturers. They were elitist, big business, and considered more condescending toward Canada. Particularly in the post-1950 period, the Grand Old Party was the one which chose to fight inflation instead of unemployment as its top priority. War on inflation usually resulted in recession, and recession in the United States normally meant recession in Canada. The coolness of Canadians to the right side of the political spectrum, the Republican side, was demonstrated by the country’s election results. For sixty of the twentieth century’s first eighty-two

years, Liberal governments were in power. If Canadians had been selecting the presidents, the Democrats would have been the big winners—all the way up to Jimmy Carter winning over Ronald Reagan.

Eisenhower, however, came in as a most popular Republican in Canadian eyes. He had commanded Canadian armies in the war and had been accorded a hero’s welcome on a post-war visit to Ottawa. His attitude toward Canada was avuncular, benign, and more plitudinous than pointed. As Pearson’s problem with him suggested, he never let knowledge of the country get in the way of his dealings with it. The detail work was left to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, and although Canadian officials respected his ability, they also found him a pompous boor. Canadian ambassador Arnold Heaney, who had the pleasure of hosting the Dulles’ for dinner, reflected on the experience: “Our dinner for the Dulles’ was good except for the Dulles’.”⁹ To Heaney he was a “strange, almost gauche creature... lacking or spurning any social graces.” To other Canadian officials like George Glazebrook, he was the prototype American power-pusher that Canadians disliked most, a bull-headed autocrat who, in Kremen-esque fashion, would haul in the wayward client state’s representative and issue orders, blowerstick style, to obey or pay the consequences.

Initially, it was because of this kind of thing, because of the Canadian perception of being pushed around, that the good-neighbour era died and the unending era of distance and doubt was born.

The feeling of being bullied by U.S. presidents was not a new one in Canada. It was in place in 1867, and continued in varying degrees throughout history. In the early post-Confederation period, the feeling was sharp because the prime ministers, who would sometimes go to Washington for extended periods to negotiate Canada-U.S. matters as part of British commissions, were always beaten at the bargaining table. They were pitted not only against the American presidents, whose power even in those pre-super-status periods was many times greater, but also the desires of the British, whose final say on the Canadian position was often more pliant than Ottawa’s. The repeated losses of the prime ministers, engendering strong anti-American strains, triggered demands for foreign policy independence in Washington which Britain granted in the 1920s. The prime ministers were then in a position to back up their noise with decision, but they also faced the prospect of negotiating with Washington without having

the power of the British as leverage. They were on their own. They were the little men against the giants and the perception endured and still endures today that they were browbeaten, dominated, and that like Pearson on Johnson's porch, they wilted under the pressure.

But as much as conventional wisdom suggests it is true, as much as self-flagellating Canadians might like to think it is true, the prime ministers have not been afraid to stand up to the presidents. Although always sensitive to the disproportionate power of the neighbour to the south, the prime ministers, in most cases, have demonstrated a stubbornness and fiery pride which, although insufficient for Canadian nationalists who crave a Tito of the West, repudiates any cowering stereotypes.

John A. Macdonald would alienate all of Washington with displays of contempt for the presidents and their men. When the Cleveland administration called for a boycott of Canada, it would witness the brave albeit slightly ludicrous spectacle of Macdonald and his Defence minister threatening to take up arms and redo 1812. Wilfrid Laurier, visiting President McKinley in Chicago, would speak to an audience entirely in French and tell complaining Americans that if they didn't like it, it was too bad. Robert Borden would line up the Dominions against the wishes of Woodrow Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference. R. B. Bennett would hand the unpopular Herbert Hoover the ultimate snub by refusing to be seen with him. After Ottawa and Washington had put together a free-trade package in the late 1940s, King would tell the Truman administration to forget it, just like Canadians had told Taft to forget his plan in 1911. St. Laurent would inform a stalling Truman that Canada had waited long enough and was going ahead on plans for the development of the St. Lawrence Seaway by itself. Compelled to attend an Eisenhower election year publicity junket in West Virginia, St. Laurent would put in the most disdainful of performances, embarrassing even his Canadian colleagues. Diefenbaker would treat Kennedy with contempt. Pearson, though battered at Camp David, would have the courage to go into the United States and criticize the Vietnam war in the first place, something other foreign leaders wouldn't do. And Trudeau, indomitable on the international stage, not about to be pushed anywhere by anyone, would tell the presidents that Canada wanted to do some looking—elsewhere.

If the performances of the prime ministers are a reflection of the

character of their countrymen, there is some grit and determination there.

But there is a streak of masochism in the Canadian view of the White House which makes Canadians reluctant to accept the notion that their prime ministers have been firm in the face of presidential abuse. Such a notion is a threat to many Canadians' deeply imbedded poor-us psyche, which requires that the presidents subjugate the prime ministers. Teddy Roosevelt noticed as early as the turn of the century, and Pearson and Dean Rusk noticed later, that anti-Americanism is a Canadian necessity.

"Canadians," said the first Roosevelt, "like to indulge themselves as a harmless luxury in a feeling of hostility to the United States. Practically this does not operate at all. Practically Canada will take an American, Van Horne, to run its railway system and America will take a Canadian, Hill, to run its.... But the average Canadian likes to feel patriotic by jeering at the man across the border, just as to a lesser degree the average Scotchman for similar reasons adopts a similar attitude toward England."

Pearson, who in the United States is considered Canada's greatest statesman, took the thought a step further, asserting: "worry about the Americans and their friendly pressures is still probably the strongest unifying Canadian force. At a time when some of us are in doubt about the nature or even the reality of a separate Canadian identity... we can stand shoulder to shoulder, one thin but unbroken red line facing Washington and proclaim: 'No surrender.'"

The Canadian attitude was a factor which exacerbated the strains. Predisposed to the suspicion of Oval Office subjugation, Canadians would tend to find neglectful treatment by the presidents on occasions when it wasn't there. Sometimes they might have done well to question the behaviour of their own prime ministers toward the White House. "Sometimes," said Jack Pickersgill, a cabinet member and adviser to prime ministers for three decades, "I thought they treated us like adults and we often acted like adolescents."

Rusk, secretary of state for Kennedy and Johnson, grew distressed in his Canadian diplomatic ventures, finding in the Ottawa officials a "knee-jerk disposition to disagree—just to demonstrate independence." Finally, at a NATO foreign ministers' meeting, he decided he'd taken enough, and when Paul Martin, External Affairs minister, asked him his position on a certain issue, he used a new tact. "My

friend," said Rusk, "you speak first because if you speak first I might be able to agree with you. But if I speak first, you would be compelled to disagree."¹⁰

In 1960, the turning point year, the year when the strong Canadian-U.S. spirit built by Roosevelt and King began to crumble, the Canadian disposition to disagree would be provided with the ingredients of unprecedented growth. The presidents of 1960 and beyond would sag to new depths of carelessness and neglect in their treatment of Canada. Foremost among the offenders would be John Kennedy who, in his period with Diefenbaker, acted as though he thought he could control Canada as if it were one of his limbs. The prime ministers of 1960 and beyond would be more anti-American in their approach than their predecessors. Foremost among the new breed was Diefenbaker, who was less willing to buckle under presidential power than any other prime minister. The personal relationship between the leaders from 1960 on would be either dreadful, distant, or disappointing. Finally the Canadian condition from 1960 on would be more nationalist than in any period since Theodore Roosevelt.

All the signals were ominous. Even before Kennedy came to power, Diefenbaker's mail—and mail was so important to his perception of the public will—was telling him Canadians felt they were being pushed around on economic and defence issues. But Diefenbaker liked Eisenhower too much to confront him personally on the problem. He had a rapport, a friendship with this president, and it was important to him. He would tell friends he could get Ike any time just by picking up the phone at his elbow. The disputes could await the election of a president for whom he had no respect. On that president's arrival, the Canada-U.S. good-will era would explode.

Observers would saddle Diefenbaker with the burden of blame. But the seeds of his personal feud with Kennedy and therefore the seeds of the era of hostility were planted as much by the young president as by Diefenbaker. In the nascent stages of their relationship, the vital stages, it was Diefenbaker who would show some good will, and Kennedy a haughty disregard. It was Kennedy who publicly ridiculed Diefenbaker's ability to speak French. It was Kennedy who, to the prime minister's face, mocked one of Diefenbaker's chief sources of pride—his ability to fish. It was Kennedy who couldn't pronounce his name properly. It was Kennedy who, after being told privately by Diefenbaker that Canada was not interested in joining the Organiza-

tion of American States, went over the head of the prime minister with a call to the Canadian public to join anyway. It was Kennedy who left behind a memorandum in Ottawa which did not, as legacy has it, refer to Diefenbaker as an S.O.B., but which was imperious and insulting in tone.

The Kennedy posture toward Diefenbaker's Canada was that of a president stretching his legs across the Canadian border and demanding a shoeshine. With Pearson, a person Kennedy could admire, the border links were slightly rebuilt, but the president's death came too soon, and his replacement Johnson was as incompatible with Pearson as Kennedy was with Diefenbaker. After the prime minister's Vietnam speech and Camp David, a constructive relationship was impossible—the loss of bilateral respect illustrated one night when Rusk spotted ambassador Charles Ritchie at a reception. The usually urbane Rusk cornered the ambassador, demanded a meeting to set him straight on some issues and, setting the time and place, snapped, "And you better wear your asbestos shorts cause I'm going to burn your ass."¹¹

Ill fortune became a significant contributor to the ill will. The string of opposite personalities in the seats of power continued. In Pierre Trudeau and Richard Nixon, the personality mix alone was a recipe for disaster. With economic nationalism a booming business in Canada, with the United States locked in a war as unpopular north of the border as anywhere else, with America losing more respect in Canada as a result of assassinations, racial riots and economic misery, opportunity was a missing word in the purview of bilateral relations.

Nixon revealed his regard for Canada in August 1971 when, as part of an American balance of payments overhaul, he announced the imposition of a ten percent surcharge on imports. Canada, traditionally exempted or at least informed well in advance of such far-reaching trade measures, was neither exempted nor informed well in advance and Trudeau began to wonder about what Mr. Nixon was up to. "Has America stopped loving us?" the prime minister asked. He met with Nixon in Ottawa in April of 1972 and it was one of those occasions in which the atmospherics were in harmony with the intent.

Snow was still on the ground and, imagining that Canadian demonstrators might wish to throw snowballs at President Nixon, government officials exercised considerable foresight. They called in a platoon of hoseers from the Public Works Department and the men hosed down the snow with steaming hot water until it disappeared.

At the prime minister's office, Bob Haldeman's advance men arrived and quickly won no friends. They didn't like the tan colour of Mr. Trudeau's furniture because it wouldn't provide a suitable backdrop for the president on television. They attempted, failingly, to have it changed to blue. There was a problem with the Canadian arrangements to have the president stay at Government House, the home of the governor-general. The president didn't want to stay there. He would stay at his ambassador's residence, they suggested. And about the grand gala at the National Arts Centre—the president would have other business to look after, they said. He could only afford a few token minutes at the gala.

Henry Kissinger, a bachelor at this time, needed a date. The prime minister's office lined up Charlotte Gobel, an attractive local television personality. Miss Gobel was escorted by Kissinger to the entertainment gala, where one unknown troupe from one unknown corner of the north country followed another unknown troupe from another unknown corner, until the oozing Canadiana was such that a squirming Kissinger turned to Gobel. "My God," he grumbled. "When is this going to end? How many more acts?"¹²

There were other problems at the gala. Flower boxes on the first tier dripped water on the people below. A queasy, courtly matron rumbled through the rows toward the ladies' salon but didn't make it. Having forgotten his security pass, cabinet member Jean Marchand was escorted back out onto Wellington Street, shouting, "Don't you know who I am?" Haldeman was furious at not being able to get Nixon out of the Arts Centre immediately after the performance and chose to parade his anger in front of everyone.

There were problems after the gala. It had been kind of an uneven evening for Mr. Kissinger and Miss Gobel, the latter taking advantage of the occasion to attack his war strategy. "Your Vietnamization policy? It's a flop, isn't it?" The secretary of state had no intention of escorting her home. But when Miss Gobel grabbed him by the arm in the parking lot in front of many dignitaries and clamoured that she was his date and the very least he could do was drop her off, Kissinger didn't have much choice. "You're absolutely right," he said. "You're absolutely right."

But the timing was bad. Miss Gobel invited Kissinger in for a drink and Kissinger, though Nixon wanted him for an important meeting on Vietnam, obliged. Inside, she was about to get some wine when she

heard the shower running. It was located next to her bedroom and she walked there, with Kissinger, to her disappointment, following. At the doorway they looked in to see a male companion of Miss Gobel's climbing out of the shower, naked. Kissinger flinched, was introduced to designer Bob Smith, and quickly repaired to the living room.¹³ When Smith, who had thought he was seeing an oversized *Time* magazine cover coming through the door, was presentable, the three had a quick drink, Miss Gobel noticing that Kissinger "had kind of lost interest." On the way out, several Kissinger security guards, not having seen Smith enter, accosted him, and the secretary of state had to come to his rescue, explaining that he was a friend. Relieved to be free of Miss Gobel, Kissinger returned to Government House where, with Nixon, he made an important decision on the Vietnam war.

The visit, not entirely saturated with good will, turned out to be an appropriate one for Nixon to make a major statement, a statement of telling significance, on the Canada-U.S. relationship.

The past speeches of the presidents and the prime ministers, he explained in addressing Parliament, tended to be cliché-ridden exercises that camouflaged the "real problems" between the countries. "They have tended to create the false impression that our countries are essentially alike."

Now, Nixon said, "It is time for Canadians and Americans to move beyond the sentimental rhetoric of the past. It is time for us to recognize that we have very separate identities; that we have significant differences; and that nobody's interests are furthered when these realities are obscured."

Nixon, in effect, was declaring an end to the special relationship between the two countries. It was time, he was saying, to recognize a new reality on the continent. Trudeau was looking on happily. He had known what Nixon was going to say and he had wanted him to say it.¹⁴ Like Nixon, he thought the special relationship unworkable and undesirable. He was intrigued by the prospect of finding something to replace it. After more than one hundred years in which the countries had moved closer together, the president and the prime minister had decided for many reasons that it would be best if they started moving apart.

CHAPTER TWO

The First Findings: John A. Macdonald and Ulysses S. Grant

IT WAS DECEMBER 8, 1870, and in the opinion of John A. Macdonald it would be “a century” before Canada would be “strong enough to walk alone.” Ulysses S. Grant, on this day, was issuing one of the only State of the Union addresses in which Canada would merit mention. The Republican president, as yet unscarred by the scandals which would shadow his stewardship, called the three-year-old country an “irresponsible agent.” It was “vexatious... unfriendly... unneighborly.” Citing harsh acts by Ottawa against American fishermen, he asked Congress for special authority: “I recommend you to confer upon the Executive the power to suspend by proclamation the operation of the laws authorizing the transit of goods, wares and merchandise across the territory of the United States to Canada.” Further, “to suspend the operation of any laws whereby the vessels of the Dominion of Canada are permitted to enter the waters of the United States.”

On Prime Minister Macdonald's orders Canadian authorities had seized hundreds of U.S. fishing vessels in maritime waters. The Americans had allegedly violated an ambiguous fifty-year-old treaty setting the boundary on the east coast. Grant, outraged at Macdonald's nerve, was requesting special retaliatory powers so that he could teach the Canadian some manners if the abuse continued.

The eighteenth president had great difficulty with Canada. Its very existence bothered him. Since his first days in office one of his goals

was to make it part of the United States. Annexation of Canada would more than double the U.S. land mass. It would remove a potential source of conflict from the continent. It would satisfy the demands of Manifest Destiny. It would be a nice plus for Grant's re-election campaign. It would look good on his resumé.

His first idea was to slay the infant country softly. Induce England to allow a referendum in Canada on total independence from the motherland. Canada would vote yes, the young president assumed, and then it would be a simple matter for the Americans to walk in and absorb. No British guns would offer protection. Grant, who guided the Union forces to victory in the Civil War, would hardly have to draw on his experience.

Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, one of the best at the job the United States would produce, thought Grant was overly optimistic. The goal was laudable, he noted in his diary, but the timetable formidable. On Grant's request he saw Sir Edward Thornton, the British ambassador to Washington, and in as much as Ottawa had no control over its foreign policy, the Canadian ambassador as well. Not a chance, said Thornton. He didn't care about the Dominion, and London wasn't fussy either. But the Canadians didn't want total independence. Macdonald would set up a howl. He and his government knew that it would be tantamount to U.S. annexation, Thornton said. They wouldn't agree to a referendum.

Grant had another idea—have Britain cede Canada to him in exchange for damages rendered on the Union forces by the British-built warship, the *Alabama*. A straight-up, uncomplicated deal. For two years, he pushed the proposal but London was unwilling to relinquish a country that was adamant about not being relinquished. “The Canadians,” Thornton told Fish, “find great fault with me for saying as openly as I do that we are ready to let them go whenever they shall wish.”

Fish believed that Canadian opinion favoured independence and perhaps annexation. “I referred to the number of Canadians now resident in the United States, the influx of French Canadians into the States, the number of mechanics and laborers who come here for the greater part of the year.” With the exception of the Canadian elite, he said, there is “a very large preponderance of sentiment in favor of separation from Great Britain.”¹

But the Gladstone government held firm and now Grant, another

annexation plan thwarted, his resentment pricked by a brash prime minister's escapades in the maritimes, was getting testy. The Ohio-born West Point graduate had several weaknesses as president: an inability to choose responsible advisers, an affair with the bottle, an appalling lack of class, and like several occupants of the Oval Office in his time, an ignorance of foreign affairs. But one thing Grant did have was grit. No one questioned that. He had rebounded from every career crash. On the battlefield he had sprung back from desperate circumstance. On his death bed, contesting the agony of cancer, he would complete his memoirs two days before passing away. "I can't spare this man," Lincoln once said as pressures to dismiss Grant climbed. "He fights."

Ottawa was at least a little fearful that the president would do something rash, like take up arms. It would not be out of character for him. Nor, at this stage of its history, would it be out of character for his country.

It was America's "Manifest Destiny," John O'Sullivan, editor of the *Democratic Review*, wrote in 1814, "to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our multiplying millions." One of history's more turgid pronouncements, the Manifest Destiny philosophy meant it was not only in the United States' interest to expand on the continent but its duty. Room was needed for the population to spread, for the superior political system to spread, for the natural dynamism to flex. The doctrine would be used to support the purchase of Alaska, the annexation of Hawaii, and the U.S. entry into the Spanish-American war.

Andrew Johnson, Grant's hapless predecessor and the first president Canada faced, was among the many who thought the doctrine should apply to Canada. For the Dominion, whose birth in 1867 he neglected to acknowledge by congratulatory telegram or any means, Johnson had what he termed a "national policy." Upon the acquisition of Alaska in 1868, he said that "comprehensive national policy would seem to sanction the acquisition and incorporation into our federal union of the several adjacent continental and insular communities." But Johnson's presidency was plagued by adversity. Much of the first half was spent trying to dispel the belief that he was a drunkard. On the day he was inaugurated vice-president, he drank too much in trying to curb a cold, turned in a teetering performance, and was forever saddled with the image. Much of the second half was spent

trying to fight off impeachment. There was no time for his national policy.

In 1870, with his annexation strategies failing, with the fisheries quarrel continuing, President Grant came to a cabinet meeting in a Manifest Destiny kind of mood. He had studied the boundary treaty and was convinced Macdonald was in error. He looked over his unspectacular cabinet group, went into a harangue over the fisheries, and lit up all faces with a declaration that he was ready to "take Canada and wipe out her commerce..."² He would ask Congress to declare war, he said, but for the fact that there was a large debt. Hamilton Fish shook his head discouragingly. Treasury Secretary George Boutwell urged patience, at least until Congress voted funds. "Oh yes," said Grant. "But really I am tired of all this arrogance and assumption."

Atlantic coast fisheries jurisdiction was an issue that had plagued relations between the North American neighbours since 1776. It was an issue that would plague bilateral relations all the way into the Pierre Trudeau-Ronald Reagan era. It would take its place along with four other issues at the top of the Canada-U.S. disputes list: continental defence, free trade and investment, boundaries, the environment.

The fisheries were the richest in the world. As American colonies prior to the revolution, the American states enjoyed the same rights to the waters as the northern colonies. The Treaty of Paris, which ended the revolution, changed little, but the War of 1812 led the British to withdraw many of the American privileges. U.S. fishermen were given access to offshore areas but, to the more rich waters inside the three-mile coastal zones, they were allowed entry only for shelter and other non-fishing purposes, and only upon purchase of licences. These conditions remained until 1854 when another agreement appeared to satisfy everyone. Inshore rights were given to the Americans in return for a free-trade pact with the Dominion on natural products. However, alleged British and Canadian support for the south in the Civil War, along with the suspicion that the Canadians were getting the better of the 1854 deal, prompted Washington to cancel the trade concessions. The treaty was thereby abrogated, the rules of 1818 came back into effect, and an angry Macdonald began ordering the boat seizures.

The fisheries were of overwhelming importance to the economies of the New England states and the Canadian provinces. Macdonald

described them as "our Alsace and Lorraine." He was well aware of the hostility festering in Mr. Grant, and of the president's wish to annex Canada. He knew also of Grant's support for the Fenian raids. The Fenians, a hysterically anti-British group of Irish-Americans, were willing to do anything to enrage London, and the takeover of Canada was thought to be appropriate—for the Fenians and for the presidents. President Johnson had countenanced the first invasions a few years earlier saying he would recognize the establishment of a Fenian Republic in Canada. At that time the incursions were repelled, but, in August of 1870, the Fenians were massing for another attack and the always upright Mr. Fish asked Mr. Grant if it would perhaps be wise to seize their arms to prevent the aggression. Grant said no, let them attack. They did, the Fenians were repelled again, and yet another piece of presidential scheming against the Dominion was dashed.

Finally, faced with an empty war chest, faced with the prospect that a conflict with Canada would bring in Britain, and faced with pressure from his secretary of state, President Grant agreed to attempt a negotiated settlement on the fisheries, along with other Canadian issues, and the *Alabama* claims. The British, bogged down with European difficulties, would be anxious for an easy settlement, Grant was advised. More important was the Canadian angle. Britain would be doing the negotiating for Canada and Britain didn't even desire the Dominion any more. Thornton had told the White House as much. It was only because Canadians wanted the connection that the connection remained. To suspect that London would put up a hard-bargaining front for a country it barely cared about while risking good relations with Washington was unreasonable.

John A. Macdonald had many reasons to be depressed in 1870 and, as he nursed his bad health, his sick child, and his endless bottles of port, the thought of being pushed into an unjust fisheries settlement by Grant and Thornton pained him constantly. As a sop to the Dominion, the British had decided that one Canadian could sit on its five-member commission undertaking the negotiations. But it was made abundantly clear that the Canadian would not be a splinter third force but an integral, submissive part of the British group. The prime minister had to accept the conditions and the decision to be made was whether or not he should be the Canadian to sit on the commission.

It would meet for two and half months. It would meet in Washington. He would face only adversaries. He was not yet recovered from a severe attack of gallstones which nearly killed him several months earlier. He was heartsick over the physical abnormality of his eighteen-month-old daughter Mary, who had been born with an oversized head. He faced little but political peril in the negotiating venture. There would be minimal acclaim in the unlikely prospect that he gained a favourable settlement. There would be a hurricane of criticism in the probable prospect of failure. But Macdonald's fear that other parties would "play the devil" with Canadian interests overshadowed all these concerns. The first Canadian prime minister decided it was time for his first visit to Washington. It would not be long before he would write back home: "I stand alone, fighting the battle of Canada."³

Macdonald first arrived in New York where he read about himself in a New York *Herald* article datelined Prescott, Ontario. "Now I had met or seen nobody at Prescott," he wrote Charles Tupper. "In the course of the day I was interviewed at New York by another New York *Herald* man who has published an equally fallacious account. Among other things he says that I told him that my views had been correctly stated in the account of the long and interesting interview I had with the *Herald* correspondent the day before at Prescott."⁴

At the Washington train station where, to his relief, there were no *Herald* reporters to greet him, Macdonald searched longingly for someone else. These were not the days when prime ministers merited nineteen-gun salutes. Naturally, President Grant wasn't there. But nor was Fish or a single American official. The Canadian representative in the capital, Thornton, didn't even bother to show. Thornton sent his carriage and an attaché, the Honourable Mr. Trench, who was accorded the distinction of greeting the first prime minister to visit Washington and who promptly took him to a hotel across the river in Arlington, Virginia.

Few of note stayed overnight in Washington because it was judged not fit to stay in. While Ottawa was a coarse lumber town in the mid-to late-nineteenth century, it compared favourably to the languid village on the Potomac. In 1891 when George Washington beheld a few acres between Georgetown, Maryland, and Alexandria, Virginia and appointed it the future U.S. capital, there was nothing there but field and swamp and cows and huts. Three glorious white edifices

were soon interspersed in the bog: the Congress building, the White House, and the Supreme Court. They were physically separated by considerable distance to symbolize the separation of powers called for in the Constitution. But the mile's journey from the White House to the Congress was more like picking one's way through jungle so that the separation came to be regarded as far more than symbolic.

The ruling elite of Washington was supposed to quickly attract wealth, people, and growth to the city but through Grant's time it hadn't yet happened. A "class of swaggering sycophants" — the confidence men, soup-seeking vagabonds, petitioning Indians — were the ones who came early and the ones who tended to remain.⁵

Politicians were viewed with even greater skepticism than in modern times. Rather than attract people to the city they were more apt to deter them. As a result the underdeveloped District of Columbia, so mocked for its philistine ways by British and French diplomats, had become an uninviting area which, oddly enough, was what some of the planners initially had in mind. Prior to 1800, fractious mobs kept forcing the government of the new republic to shift from town to town, so that a priority for the creators of Washington became a somewhat isolated location far from the madding crowd. To that purpose they made a stipulation for the district that has remained, with controversy, through time: no participation by the Washington citizenry in state or local government; no senators elected from the district; no representatives.

On his first full day in the city, Macdonald, who was not to be introduced to the president for a week, was taken with the other British commissioners on a tour of Congress where he met some annexationist senators, heard some impressive speeches, and learned of the amusing antics of legislators who couldn't read or write. To impress their constituents they chose to purchase speeches from free-lance literates and have them inserted in the Congressional record of the day under their own name. But the writers would sometimes sell the same speech to several members leaving constituents to discover that by stunning coincidence their Congressman had uttered exactly the same speech in the House as many others.⁶

Prime Minister Macdonald was fast into the Washington social scene. Not a politician to confine himself to tea, he turned out to be about the only Canadian leader who could imbibe glass for glass with the presidents. (Later Mackenzie King would toss about in bed at

might frightened that he had offended FDR by not sharing a drink with him. Truman would have to bring his own branch water to Ottawa. Brandy and cigars with Kennedy after dinner was disagreeable to Dielenbaker, and Lester Pearson was offended when Lyndon Johnson tried to get him smashed on bourbons before sunset.)

One of the Washington entertainments was the Potomac yacht party and, at one of the many he attended, Macdonald fell into conversation with a senator's wife who was not aware that she was speaking to the prime minister of Canada. It was terrible, she said, that Canadians were governed by that "perfect rascal," Macdonald. "Yes," said the prime minister, "he is a perfect rascal." "Why," she came back, "do they keep such a man in power?" "Well," said Macdonald, "they can't seem to get on without him." The lady's husband strolled into the conversation and introduced Mr. Macdonald to his incredulous spouse. "Don't apologize," said the prime minister. "All you've said is perfectly true and well known at home."⁷

The Macdonald position in the negotiations provided that if maritime inshore fishing rights were to be returned to the Americans, a wide ranging free-trade arrangement, like the one agreed to in 1854, would have to be granted in return. Secretary of State Fish, who headed up the American commission, wasn't interested in trade concessions. Meeting daily with the president on strategy, he came forward with a straight cash proposal of one million dollars for fishing rights in perpetuity. Macdonald was outraged. Well prepared, he tabled figures showing that the American catch from Canadian shores in one year alone was worth six million dollars. "Utterly inadmissible," he declared. Grant and Fish tried a compromise: a cash sum plus free trade in a small number of items — coal, fish, and firewood. Macdonald found the list, particularly firewood, insultingly inconsequential. The other British commissioners thought it was appropriate. They were beginning to wonder about this Canadian upstart and their anxiety turned instantly to anger when, in a daring diplomatic stroke, Macdonald went above everyone's head via cable to the Gladstone government in London and was successful. He won a statement that the Canadian fishing rights should not be given up for money and that all matters in the prospective treaty relating to Canada would have to be ratified by the Parliament in Ottawa.⁸

Among the Macdonald adversaries now was the press. "The New York papers are beginning to pitch into me as being 'the nigger on the

fence. I am rather glad of it as it will do me no harm in Canada." Fish was becoming increasingly distressed by the Canadian's obstinacy. The former governor of New York, cultured, wise, wealthy, was the Grant cabinet's calibre person. Compared to the others, the San Francisco *Chronicle* would write, he "stood alone like a purifying eucalyptus tree in a malarial swamp. His presence saved the name of the American Government from utter disgrace."

Grant was an aloof president who deigned to see the prime minister only twice during his eleven-week stay. Once to be introduced, once to say goodbye. Contact and often judgment was deferred to Fish and it didn't take long before the secretary was taking Lord De Grey, the head of the British Commission, aside and pressuring him to bring Macdonald into line. "I shall take the opportunity of letting Macdonald understand," De Grey assured him, "that he is here not as a representative of the Canadian but of the British Government."

Fish and his colleagues couldn't understand that the Canadian Parliament could possibly have any real power of ratification. "They pooh pooh it altogether," wrote Macdonald. "They think that when the treaty is once made the ultimate ratification of it by the Canadian parliament is a mere matter of form."

His opinion of Grant and company was less than flattering. "The present government here is as weak as water and they have not the pluck to resist the pressure from their friends in the Senate in the slightest degree.... The absurd attempts of the U.S. commissioners to depreciate the value of our Fisheries would be ridiculous if they were not so annoying." As for the British he said that "they seem to have one thing on their minds. That is to go home to England with a treaty in their pockets, settling everything, no matter at what cost to Canada." As for himself: "I have been in many responsible and many disagreeable positions. But in both respects my present position exceeds everything I have previously undertaken.... The sooner I am out of it, the better."⁹

Macdonald had rejected many American compromise proposals and now, pushing his fortunes further, he turned down yet another—a straight trade offer with an enlarged list of goods in the free-entry category. Again his British co-commissioners were incensed. Again the American commissioners were incensed. And again the prime minister contacted London. Gladstone, in another surprise, backed him. The commission was cabled. They were informed that the Dominion would not have to accept the latest offer.

But the end was near. Grant and Fish now decided they had tolerated enough. They decided not only against any further trade concessions but, arguing that no trade package could get through the protectionist Congress, decided to withdraw all trade concessions. They offered only a cash settlement to be determined by international arbitration. Later, as an afterthought, they decided they would throw in the free entry of Canadian fish.

Macdonald was predictably furious. He predictably turned down the offer. He predictably wired London for help, but his wrath was becoming redundant. The negotiations were dragging and all parties were becoming restless. Other issues had been settled, and only the nagging Canadian fisheries problem remained. This time De Grey cabled London. "If you don't back us up against Macdonald he will be quite unmanageable and I see no chance of coming to an arrangement." As a favour to the Dominion the British decided they would pay Ottawa compensation for the Fenian raids, something Macdonald had been chasing Washington to do. This done, Gladstone felt that the prime minister should accept the latest American proposal. His word was final, and with Macdonald having nowhere else to turn, the agreement with the Americans was made.

The signing day for the Treaty of Washington was May 8, 1871. It was a splendid day in the capital, the sunlight rushing through the mellow spring air, exhilarating almost everything it touched. The signing parties assembled in the State Department with a merriment that matched the weather. For Grant, the settlement of the British and Canadian disputes would greatly enhance his re-election efforts. For the British, a strengthened friendship with Washington was a most positive development. The only person who wasn't grinning was John A. Macdonald. There were to be no phoney airs from the Canadian prime minister. He had asked that his objections be recorded in the text of the treaty. He had been refused this but in the intrepid manner which marked the lonely stand of the brandy-nosed leader of the child-country against the Americans, Macdonald had at least won the right to have his condemnation officially recorded in letters to all the commissioners.

Now Hamilton Fish, sporting a triumphant glow, circulated in the treaty room and Lord De Grey took his hand. "This is the proudest day of my life," De Grey gushed. "It is a great result," said Fish. While the congratulations poured forth and the papers were readied for signing, the flush of enthusiasm was momentarily interrupted when a

commissioner accidentally knocked burning sealing wax on a clerk's hands. Horrendous pain brought a look of stragulation to the poor man's face. He tried valiantly, given the dignity and joy of the occasion, to suppress his anguish. But finally he buckled over in tears and cries of pain.

Macdonald felt like doing the same thing. The documents were moved to him and he readied to sign. But he could not resist the temptation to register his discontent. He looked up at the secretary of state. "Here go the fisheries," he said. "You get a good equivalent for them," Hamilton Fish responded. "No," said Macdonald as the hushed gathering looked on. "We give them away."

He signed his name and rose from the table. "They are gone," he said.¹⁰

CHAPTER THREE

Games Presidents Play: Grant, Hayes, Arthur, Cleveland, and Harrison

WITH A CONDESCENSION that characterized much of official America's attitude toward the new Dominion, The New York *Star* pontificated on the results of the Washington Treaty: "Never before were people more doomed to disappointment than these ever sanguine Canadians... Here are a people who in consequence of having acquired a sort of quasi-independence put on all the airs of a great power." But have pity on them, the newspaper said. "These luckless vassals of royalty are entitled to some commiseration. They went to the federal capital for wool and came back shorn."

It wouldn't be long before the luckless vassals would be back in Washington for wool again only to come back shorn again. A pattern of familiarity developed in the relationships between the men at the top in the early decades. It involved passionately stubborn Canadian prime ministers or cabinet members or diplomats throwing themselves into the pit against Americans of twice the power and, with rare exception, meeting the predictable oblivion. But what mattered most, it seemed, was the fight, the will to stand alone. There was a lot of that in the Canadians. They had a nation to build.

Alexander Mackenzie, the stern, highly principled prime minister who interrupted Macdonald's reign, dearly wanted a new trade treaty and would be disappointed when the prospects for his negotiator, George Brown, turned gloomy. But what would console him

would be the effort, the fight. "Whether we obtain a treaty or not," he wrote Brown's wife Anne, "we have found this great advantage; That the Yankees know now that the Canadians are able to do their own negotiating effectively and that the days of English diplomatic buffoonery and blundering are over on this continent." He concluded: "After this we will at least be respected and can respect ourselves."

Mackenzie, who swept into power and also into one of Canada's worst depressions on the heels of the Conservatives' railway scandal, was insulted by the Washington Treaty and the arrogance of Mr. Fish. "It looks as if he considered us as a sort of political beggar looking with longing eyes to him for the crumbs the Republic might drop to us." But Mackenzie's wracked economy could use crumbs. It badly needed a stripping away of American trade barriers. The Liberal government's program called for such: looser ties with Britain, and greater economic integration on the continent.

An opportunity arrived immediately as a result of two factors. The newly elected Congress was more oriented toward free trade. The international tribunal set up by the Washington Treaty to determine the price of American privileges in Canadian waters hadn't yet convened. Now there were suggestions that rather than pay a high price, Washington might consider the alternative of trade concessions. Mackenzie sent Senator Brown, the cocky, truculent editor of the *Toronto Globe* to the capital on a scouting mission. Never short on optimism, Brown reported that there was a distinctly receptive mood. Later he would predict that a deal could be worked out which will make Canada "a great country ere many years to come."

Prime Minister Mackenzie was not about to confront the hopeless negotiating odds that faced Macdonald. Through hard bargaining he secured a negotiating commission in which Ottawa had equal status with Britain. Brown was named one co-commissioner and ambassador Thornton, the other.

The Brown performance featured tireless, unorthodox and, for the Americans, exceptionally aggravating diplomacy. It was not the custom and it would never be the custom for foreign diplomats to lobby legislators on Capitol Hill. Negotiation is supposed to be restricted to the White House and the executive departments. Throughout history this limitation would hinder Canadian efforts. On more than a dozen occasions negotiators would arrange pacts with the administration only to have them turned down by an unconvinced Congress.

George Brown paid no attention to such protocol. His strategy was to furiously work the Hill, obtain its support, and have President Grant feel the pressure. He rode about the muddy, still unfinished capital in a cherry-sained coach with "a portly, dignified colored gentleman on the dickey in full blazing livery and buttons that would fairly have stolen the heart of Ginney [daughter]." He mixed continuously with senators, men "entirely ignorant of the facts," and reported home that "we were soon as thick as thieves." He started a campaign with the nation's leading newspapers, visiting them one by one, explaining the Canadian position and eliciting such favourable press that Fish was soon complaining about his behaviour. As temperatures soared in the Washington spring of 1874, the Canadian became overwhelmingly confident. "Nothing but bad management can now prevent a really satisfactory agreement from being obtained."¹

Whether the Yankees, as Prime Minister Mackenzie called them, were as impressed with Brown's performance as was Brown was another question. He had marshalled some support in Congress for a trade package but the president and his men were hardly stirred. Grant, trying to cope with assorted kickback scandals and other more important matters, was largely indifferent to Brown's hard sell and Fish, lead negotiator for the Americans, was moving slowly. While Brown was wiring most positive news to Mackenzie, Fish was dispassionately noting in his diary that the prospects were grim.

Congress would be adjourning for the summer on June 22, 1874. At the start of the month, Brown and Fish still had nothing to put to it. Brown was becoming suspicious of Fish, who he suspected was deliberately stalling until the recess date when the issue would die. But, "at his time of life, to go into so elaborate a cheat without any gain seems incredible." After an Ottawa visit by Brown to get further instructions from Mackenzie, after days of haggling over fine points, an agreement was finally reached—one week before adjournment.

Then the British government demanded that the entire text of the treaty be wired for approval to London. It took valuable time and Brown was furious. "Three precious days lost."

On June 18 he got an opportunity to meet with Grant. The president held the fate of the treaty in his hands. If he sent it to Congress with a ringing personal endorsement, it would likely be taken up in the dying days and passed. If he sent it over without fanfare, it would have little chance. Brown, in the White House for a

reception, hung around until almost everyone had left, waited for the opportune moment, approached Grant and began to plug the treaty. The president gave him great news. In Brown's words, he "broke out enthusiastically" for the pact. "He congratulated me on the great success that I had accomplished and assured me that he would take every measure to have the Senate endorse it."

But Brown didn't know Ulysses Grant. The president, a few hours before the reception, had met with Secretary of State Fish. The treaty was on the president's desk. Fish asked him how it should be forwarded to the Senate. "Without recommendation," Grant said.²

It was over. Without the push from the president, the Senate did not take up the treaty before the session closed. Grant had told Brown one thing, while doing the opposite. George Brown wired the prime minister. "Had he sent it down honestly as a Government measure it would have been sustained." Relentless, as Macdonald had been, Brown travelled to Washington when Congress reopened in December to hustle the treaty again. Fish told him immediately that his cause was hopeless. It was. All Brown got from the trip were some introductions to visiting dignitaries such as the King of the Canary Islands. "I saw King Kalahua today... He is a fine looking savage—tall, robust and quite able to digest a reasonably sized baby at a meal."

Ottawa had been thwarted again. Another treaty-making effort had been spurned. Ulysses Grant, unable to achieve his annexation wish, could not have been expected to do the Dominion any favours and he didn't. The tariffs would remain high. The Canadian economy would suffer. But there may have been a little irony in it all. In treating his neighbour so callously, Grant may have played a crucial role in saving it. His protectionist policies became a major motivating factor in sustaining John A. Macdonald's national policy. The high American tariffs helped forge a realization in the new country that the United States could not be relied on for economic help; that Canada would have to become more self-sufficient; that a trans-Canada railway was necessary to tie the country together economically as well as physically; that Canada had to prepare itself to go it alone on the continent; that the national policy was needed.

Following Grant's exit in 1876, the trade issue and the fisheries dispute continued to haunt the early decades of the bilateral relationship, driving a wedge between the presidents and the prime ministers and

their countries. President Grover Cleveland would regret the day he got entangled in the disputes and suffer badly at the polls as a result of them. Willfrid Laurier would drop two elections because of his free-trade fetish. William Howard Taft would be dealt a harsh political setback by the Canadian electorate on reciprocity.

Rutherford B. Hayes, Grant's successor, was viewed with promise in the Canadian capital. Lord Dufferin, the governor-general, had visited Hayes at the White House and Hayes had shocked him by returning the visit, stopping by at his hotel. "Such a proceeding," Dufferin wrote Mackenzie, "is very unusual as President Grant did not even return Prince Alfred's visit." It is, he said, "to be taken as a proof of the anxiety of this government to evince the friendly spirit with which it regards Canada." Make sure the newspapers know about this "exceptional act of courtesy," he advised the prime minister. "After cudgelling my brains it occurred to me that I might gratify him by asking his son... to return with me to Ottawa."

In narrowly electing the Republican Hayes, Americans chose an honest, pious man to follow a scandal-tarred administration, just as one hundred years later they chose an honest and pious man in Jimmy Carter to follow a scandal-tarred administration. But although Hayes, a former Union army general and Ohio governor, displayed a surface kindness toward Canada, there was little doubt as to his real motivation.

On May 25, 1879, the president made a one-paragraph entry in his diary. Lord Dufferin would have found it interesting. "The annexation to the U.S.," wrote Hayes, "of the adjacent parts of the continent both north and south seems to be, according to the phrase of 1844, our 'manifest destiny.' I am not in favor of artificial stimulants to this tendency. But I think I see plainly that it is now for the interests of both Canada and the United States that property and in order and with due regard to the feelings of Great Britain, the two countries should come under one government. If it were known that we would probably pay the whole or part of the Canadian debts, or would assume to pay them, would it not stimulate the feeling in favor of annexation in Canada?"

William Henry, a friend, visited Hayes at the White House and wrote: "I find that the President is full of the question of annexation and would like to bring it about during his own Administration. He is doing everything that is proper to have the question fairly considered

by the thoughtful men of the two countries and is keeping up a pretty active correspondence."

Hayes had a special motive in the possible addition of Canada. He saw Canadians as a distinctly conservative breed who would vote Republican.

His thoughts on the possible acquisition of Canada were summed up by Henry: "His plan is for the United States to assume the debt and for our people to push into the Red River country and thus Americanize that portion of the country from Lake Superior to the Pacific. This is being done rapidly, and whether in time for this Administration or of the next, it is soon to be."

Henry advised the president that Macdonald, back in power in Ottawa, was making an added push to keep Manitobans loyal through the use of the press. Hayes planned to open negotiations with the British for Canada when the conditions were right. But such conditions never arrived. London wasn't overly keen, Canada was certainly opposed, and while opinion in Washington favoured absorption, the climate wasn't hot enough to command action. William Everts, Hayes' secretary of state and formerly counsel for the United States on the Treaty of Washington, was surprisingly lukewarm.

The Hayes presidency was otherwise uneventful from a Canadian point of view, but when he stepped aside in 1880, Macdonald had high cause for concern. James Garfield became president and his secretary of state, James G. Blaine, was an American whose appetite for the continent was more voracious than most. But Macdonald did not have to worry for long. As Garfield and Blaine stood in the Washington railway station just four months after inauguration, a member of the Stalwarts, the conservative wing of the Republican party, shouted, "I am a Stalwart and now Arthur is President." He fired two shots, one grazing Garfield's arm, the other burying in his back. Garfield died four months later and then Vice President Arthur was president and Blaine no longer the secretary of state.

Chester Arthur, the Vermont-born lawyer who disappointed many of his followers by refusing to ladle out patronage in conveyor-belt fashion, distinguished himself in Canadian annals by bringing back the fish war. Following Brown's unsuccessful venture, an international commission meeting in Halifax set a price of \$5,500,000 for American use of the Atlantic fisheries over a twelve-year period. Even though Ottawa had vehemently opposed the idea of a cash settlement, the

Halifax outcome was viewed as somewhat of a victory. "The first Canadian diplomatic triumph," Prime Minister Mackenzie called it.

"It will justify me in insisting that we know our neighbours and our own business better than any Englishman." The high price disgusted official Washington and Hayes and Everts came close to demanding a new hearing.

Bitterness built in the ensuing years, and complaints arose against not only the exorbitant price tag, but also the part of the treaty allowing the free entry of Canadian fish. At the close of his term, President Arthur, supporting a move in Congress, reneged on the Washington Treaty. Washington had abrogated the treaty of 1854 and won a new deal in 1871. Now it was abrogating the treaty of 1871 and demanding another new deal. "Mr. Arthur is now engaged in the amiable work of embarrassing his successor," Macdonald wrote with prescience on Christmas Day in 1884. Observing closely, as he always did, the American political scene, the prime minister feared even worse problems. With Arthur stepping down, he witnessed the nomination by the Republicans of his number one foe. "I am awfully disappointed at Blaine's nomination. If he is elected we may look out for continental trouble... His nomination however will disgust the respectable Republicans and if the Democratic Convention shortly to be held has the sense to nominate a candidate of high character... he would have a very fair chance of election." To the delight of Macdonald, the Democrats nominated Grover Cleveland of Buffalo, and in a general election, which may have saved Macdonald's Dominion from an annexation bid, Cleveland defeated Blaine.

But the corpulent Cleveland, who won despite the scandalous campaign revelation that he had sired a bastard child, was not the president that Macdonald hoped he would be. The exigencies of politics, so powerful a force in the unravelling of the affairs of the continent, played tricks with the good will of this dedicated and diligent chief executive, pushing him to levels of belligerence that had Canadians on the verge of taking up arms.

The latest American treaty abrogation again remitted fisheries jurisdiction to the treaty of 1818, meaning that Americans could only enter inshore waters for non-fishing purposes and required licences to do even that. Provoked by Washington's latest breach of faith, Macdonald had American boats seized for the most trivial of infractions. When the *David J. Adams* was taken, the ensuing uproar in the New

England states prompted the Cleveland administration to lodge a complaint in London that Canada did not have the right to enforce the articles of a U.S. treaty made originally with Great Britain. An indignant Canadian Parliament responded by passing a fisheries bill with clauses almost identical to the pact of 1818. Seizures continued at an evocative pace. At a Prince Edward Island port, an unlicensed American boat docked and its crew purchased potatoes. Canadian authorities boarded the boat, seized the potatoes, and, hearing that the captain had eaten some, administered an emetic to him, and disembarked with his emissions. They were making sure that even the eaten spuds didn't make it out of port.

With pressure from the White House and London, Macdonald sent Finance minister Charles Tupper to the U.S. capital for consultations. "Well Sir Charles," said Secretary of State Thomas Bayard to the surprised visitor, "the Confederation of Canada and the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway have brought us face to face with a nation and we may as well discuss public questions from that point of view." It was not the point of view that the Dominion's diplomats were used to hearing. But Cleveland, who worked late nights studying the history of the fisheries problem, and the gracious Bayard were alarmed by the trend in bilateral relations and wanted a settlement. "A full and clear survey of the situation," Bayard said in a letter to businessmen, "causes me to recognize that a crisis in the affairs of this continent is probably at hand. The nature of the policies now to be determined upon in our relations with the Dominion of Canada is most important to the welfare of this and succeeding generations."

To Tupper, Bayard wrote with equal apprehension: "The gravity of the present affairs between our two countries demands entire frankness. I feel we stand at the parting of the ways. In one direction I can see a well assured, steady, healthful relationship, devoid of petty jealousies, and filled with the fruits of a prosperity arising out of a friendship cemented by mutual interests... On the other a career of embittered rivalry, staining our long frontier with the hues of hostility, in which victory means the destruction of an adjacent prosperity without gain to the prevalent party. A mutual, physical and moral deterioration which ought to be abhorrent to patriots on both sides."³

The Democrat Cleveland had broken a run of six straight Republican presidents, but the Senate, which must ratify all treaties, was still

dominated by Republicans, and they didn't want consultation with Canada. They wanted retaliation. "Whenever the American flag on an American fishing smack is touched by a foreigner," cried congressman Henry Cabot Lodge in reacting to a flag-burning episode in the disputed zones, "the American heart is touched." The Congress passed legislation in February 1877 authorizing the president to exclude Canadian vessels from U.S. waters and stop the importation of Canadian fish. Cleveland signed it, but had no intention of putting it into effect. He regarded the bill as a product of the regional interests of New England and if any action was to be taken, he said, it would have to be in the national interest.

Finally, with an interim arrangement in force to keep the maritime waters calm, yet another joint high commission was appointed to look at the fisheries and other trade matters. Each side named three commissioners, and as was the case in 1871, the Canadian side consisted of mainly non-Canadians. Queen Victoria selected the distinguished Joseph Chamberlain, and the undistinguished Sir Lionel Sackville-West, the British ambassador in Washington. Bayard described him as a "postage stamp." His only vocal contribution in three months of hearings was to ask that a certain window be closed. Tupper was the sole Canadian representative, but was nevertheless able to exercise a steering influence over the commission. His presence led Bayard to complain that the control of the negotiations had been yielded to a man who subjected all questions to "the demands of Canadian politics."

But in keeping with what was becoming a familiar pattern, the Yankees frustrated and infuriated the Dominion side. Having originally agreed that the commission would deal with the entire question of commercial relations, Bayard announced, on the first day, that negotiations would be limited to the fisheries. Then, having conceded that the Americans were only interested in finding a better arrangement for buying supplies in Canadian ports, and after moving to within a notch of a final agreement on that basis, Bayard suddenly declared that the United States now wanted fishing privileges. Canadian Justice Minister John Thompson, a future prime minister who was assisting Tupper, was prompted to write home: "These yankee politicians are the lowest race of thieves in existence... Nothing will come of our mission but the board bills." Chamberlain, the host of spectacular dinner parties during the hearings, exploded, calling the

American side "a bunch of dishonest tricksters." Prime Minister Macdonald had warned Tupper that "there is no fair dealing to be expected from them." Now he wrote: "I think the Americans are bargaining like costermongers."

With some sessions so ill-tempered that commissioners asked their contents to be struck from the official record, an agreement, which excited neither side, was reached. The Canadian government would have full jurisdiction over most estuaries and bays. American boats were given free navigation of the Strait of Canso and their fishermen guaranteed the right to purchase supplies on homeward voyages. A further mixed commission would decide details.

But a presidential election was nearing. The Republican Senate could not let a Democratic president head into the campaign taking credit for settling such an important, bitter dispute. The GOP solution? Label it a pro-Canadian, pro-British agreement signed by a pro-Canadian, pro-British president. Sell the citizenry on the idea that its government had been out-negotiated by the Canucks. Reject the treaty.

The plan was carried out. Posters were put up: "Cleveland runs well in England." The Senate defeated the treaty by a vote of thirty to twenty-seven. Ottawa was dealt yet another blow by the United States.

But the story was far from complete. The loss of the just-negotiated treaty was minor compared to what happened next. Neither the Canadian prime minister nor the Republican party had calculated the political animal in the person of Grover Cleveland. Comparatively speaking, the president had been rather favourably disposed to the north country. There was little, if any, absorption sentiment in the man. He had not overreacted to the boat seizures by Macdonald. He had shown a keen interest in understanding the complexities of bilateral relations and the feelings of Canadians. Only Franklin Roosevelt would be more interested, and only Jimmy Carter would know more details. There was no expectation that now, at the end of his first term, a president with the integrity of Cleveland would resort to shock treatment.

But at four o'clock on August 23, 1888, two days after the Senate rejected the treaty, a message from President Cleveland was read in Congress. A reporter from the *New York Times* was there. "The Republicans sat stupefied," he would write. "Lightning would not

have stunned them more completely." James G. Blaine was there. "I must say," he would assert, "that considering all circumstances it is the most extraordinary document that ever was sent from the White House to the Capitol."

"Our citizens engaged in fishing enterprises in waters adjacent to Canada have been subjected to numerous vexatious interferences and annoyances," Cleveland's message said. "Their vessels have been seized upon the pretext which appeared to be entirely inadmissible and they have otherwise been treated by the Canadian authorities and officials in a manner inexcusably harsh and oppressive...."

Then to the heart of his proclamation—an embargo of Canada. "I recommend immediate legislative action conferring upon the Executive the power to suspend by proclamation the operation of all laws and regulations permitting the transit of goods, wares and merchandise in bond across or over the territory of the United States to and from Canada.

"I am not unmindful of the gravity of the responsibility assumed in adopting the line of conduct nor do I fail in the least to appreciate its serious consequences. It will be impossible to injure our Canadian neighbours by retaliatory measures without inflicting some damage upon our own citizens."

The question was, why now? Why so late? The answer was politics. "It looks," said Republican senator Fasset, "rather late in the day for President Cleveland to pose as an aggressive American. I am afraid that some people will be mean enough to say that he does it for purely campaign purposes." A *New York* paper said the President has recommended "a course of action which, in his own conscience, he must regard as utterly barbarous."

Reporters caught up to Prime Minister Macdonald in Sydney, Nova Scotia. "It seems to me that the American people would look better in the eyes of the world if instead of retaliating they should make laws for the good of their country," he said. The recommended embargo, he said, "illustrates to my mind more forcibly than ever before the wonderful and monstrous pitfalls which American politics will load a man into. It is nothing more or less than an exigency arising from... the peculiar conditions of the two political parties."

Days later he asserted that Canadians need not worry for they are "as independent as any people under the sun." While Congress deliberates "we can afford to wait in calm, dignity and self respect for

the action of our neighbours. If they shut the doors we can remain outside. If they keep them open we can remain as at present."

The rest of the country and the rest of Macdonald's cabinet were hot. In Nicolet, Quebec on September 5, 1888, Adolph Caron, federal minister of the militia, fired the passions of the French Canadians. "They [Americans] are jealous and envious of our great progress and transcontinental railroads. We are the fifth maritime power in the world and in the event of trouble, the fishermen of the Gulf of St. Lawrence would in the moment of danger rush as one man to the defense of our rights. We do not want to fight with our neighbours or with anyone else," he said. "But would we sacrifice our rights for the sake of peace?" The audience was worked up, "No!" they screamed, "No! Never!"

"No," said Caron. "I know you too well to think such a thing." The *Washington Post*, which was not to deem Canada important enough to set up a bureau in the country, had a reporter in Nicolet for this occasion. "Sir Adolph was very excited during the speech and the Frenchmen waved their hats and cheered until they were hoarse over the patriotic sentiments uttered," he wrote.

He was amused by the Quebecers. "It is actually the impression in this part of Quebec among the ignorant French Canadians that the United States and Canada are on the brink of a bloody war and that Sir Adolph would need very little urging to call out the militia and drive all the yankees into the gulf."

Americans greeted any prospect of war with Canada with a combination of ridicule and scorn. When Macdonald himself began sounding belligerent, a Baltimore paper reported that "he looked and talked fight." But "Sir John need not trouble himself to fight any battles before war is declared nor to violate the requirements of courtesy by swashbuckling.... Sir John is simply guilty of very bad manners but his truculent trickings alarm no one on this side of the line. We are respectful of the rights of our neighbours but if Canada should provoke war, the militia of the state of New York alone could whip her into the Gulf of St. Lawrence and send her blubbering for help to the home government."

The *Brooklyn Citizen* was insulting: "In the Dominion there is gnashing of teeth and abusive language. If the Canucks had the power, as they have the inclination, they would forthwith send an army over the border and whip us into subjection without delay."

Luckily for the peace of the American continent the Canadians are such small fry in every way that their wild talk meets with no response from this side and only excites ridicule and disgust in Great Britain.... England is in no mood for getting into a quarrel with this country on the account of such an obstreperous and ungrateful child as the 21-year-old Dominion has proven to be."

But the American attitude was perhaps best displayed in a *Washington Post* editorial on the crisis: "We believe that the United States and Canada will eventually become one country and this belief grows out of the necessities of the situation. The Canadians are too intelligent and too much addicted to the habit of looking out for their own interests to continue much longer denying themselves the manifest and substantial advantages that would result from Union. They need the change much more than we do."

Cleveland's embargo Canada bill passed the House of Representatives on September 8, 1888 and went to the Senate for a vote on final approval. The president had the Republican senators in a deep quandary. Nominally, his bill had been aimed at Canada, but as Macdonald wisely noted in a letter to Governor-General Lansdowne, its real intent was to throw chaos into the Republican ranks. How could the president be accused of cuddling Canada and Britain when he was calling for such severe action? "Cleveland, I fancy," said the prime minister, "had ascertained that the Irish vote would carry New York against him and so, in desperation, took an extra twist at the tail of the British lion." Canada was being used purely for political ends, Republicans could vote against the bill, but they would be voting against harsh action the likes of which they had been advocating. They could vote for it, but that would put them into the embarrassing position of handing the president an election-eve victory on the campaign's most controversial issue.

The least damaging course, the Grand Old Party decided, was rejection. As rationale they claimed that the American economy would suffer just as much by the Cleveland measure as the Canadian. Detroit businessmen were bitterly complaining that they would face financial hardship. Buffalo was worried about the effect on import trade. New England railways carrying Canadian freight were raising a storm. Thus, the Republicans voted down the measure and Canadians, particularly the Quebecers, were able to relax.

But John A. Macdonald, now in his seventy-fourth year, could not

Running under the Republican banner against Cleveland was the dour Benjamin Harrison. Harrison was a strong admirer of James G. Blaine. If Harrison won, Blaine would be secretary of state and this, said Macdonald, "means continual discomfort for Canada not only for four years but Blaine will work steadily for the Presidency for the following term and will therefore throw himself into the arms of the Irish Americans."

Cleveland's campaign looked promising in the early weeks. His embargo bill had stripped strength from the Republican effort to portray him as London's lackey. But none other than the nonentity named Sackville-West ignited the issue again, sending the Cleveland campaign tumbling. The British ambassador was victimized by the dirty tricks of an early-day replica of Richard Nixon's Donald Segretti. A Republican agent, masquerading as a naturalized Englishman named Murchison, wrote a letter to Sackville-West asking advice on how he should vote. When the ambassador wrote back saying that Cleveland still had the most favourable leanings to Britain and Canada, so vote for him, it was all the Republicans needed. They gleefully disseminated copies of the letter all over the country and particularly in New York where the heavy Irish vote would be crucial. The letter became a campaign sensation. Cleveland had Sackville-West dismissed with what a supporter termed "his biggest boot of best leather." But the situation wasn't saved. Harrison, with the help of Republican vote-buying, lost the popular vote by 96,000 but won the election in the electoral college, his win in New York deciding the outcome.

The likeable, hard-working Cleveland, a man so overweight that when he tried to stand up his head would tilt, a man whose last living words were, "I have tried so hard to do right," lumbered sadly from the centre stage, a victim of cruel circumstance. On entering office he had been determined to avoid foreign squabbles but the ramifications of the one and only such issue he was dragged in on had sealed his demise. But those who felt there was no justice would feel better in a few years. Cleveland would be back.

Benjamin Harrison, never burdened by a surfeit of charisma, was described by a young fellow Republican named Teddy Roosevelt as "a cold-blooded, narrow minded, obstinate, timid old psalm-singing politician." A humourless fifty-five-year-old lawyer from Indiana, he was embroiled in instant controversy when a story hit the American

newspapers suggesting an all-too-familiar theme to Canadian eyes—he wanted to take the country over. The story was based on statements Harrison made during the campaign and it led many scribes to his doorstep for reaction. "Well, you know, I have nothing to say upon matters of that sort. As yet I have not had time to give consideration to the Canadian question." But he denied suggesting annexation during the campaign: "I did, I believe, invade Canadian waters when I was at Middle Bass this summer and capture a few fish. But that is about as far as I have gone."

His disposition toward Canada was about as miserable as that of any of the presidents and Macdonald had been right in thinking that his secretary of state would be Blaine. Had the prime minister seen a memo lying around the State Department, he would have been even more distressed. The major tenet of foreign policy, the unsigned memorandum declared, was "to unite the continent, secure its independence and prevent the northern part of it from being turned into an outpost of European reaction." It added that union "would exclude war from the continent" and solve questions which, with an independent Canada, would be open to "an endless vista of dispute." The recommended strategy? "Union is likely to be promoted by everything which asserts the commercial autonomy of the continent and helps to make Canada feel that to enjoy her full measure of prosperity she must be economically a community of this hemisphere, not an outlying dependency of a European power."⁴

Initially, however, the Harrison administration went the opposite route. One of Harrison's top priorities being to appease the big business community, he brought in the highest tariff at that time in U.S. history. Sponsored by a future president, William McKinley, the legislation increased duties on imports so steeply that products from many foreign countries, including Canada, were effectively barred. Hit hardest were the Dominion's agricultural products, and coming as it did when the Canadian economy was already depressed, the tariff struck worry in Macdonald that the long reign of his Conservative government was over. In Canada, whose population was five million compared to sixty million in the United States, there were four factions: those favouring closer ties to Britain, those favouring the status quo, those favouring commercial reciprocity with the United States and, prompted by the plummeting condition of the Canadian economy, an increasing number favouring annexation. The prime

minister thought the tariff was designed to starve Canada into union. "Sir Charles Tupper will tell you that every American statesman covets Canada," he wrote George Stephen, president of the Canadian Pacific Railway. "The greed for its acquisition is on the increase, and God knows where it will all end." The British ties still strong in him, the opposition Liberals gathering around a free-trade plank, Macdonald said: "We must face the fight at our next election and it is only the conviction that the battle will be better fought under my guidance than under another's that makes me undertake the task, handicapped as I am, with the infirmities of old age."

He had a fear, the same fear which was to grip John Diefenbaker, who would also run a campaign against the Americans, and whose idol was Macdonald. "I left to ourselves," Macdonald wrote, "I have no doubt of a decision in our favour, but I have serious apprehensions, which are shared by our friends here, that a large amount of Yankee money will be expended to corrupt our people."

Liberals, led by the elegant Wilfrid Laurier, had been holding meetings with Blaine and other American officials to find support for their unrestricted reciprocity plank. At the same time they were careful to emphasize that the closer commercial ties would not lead to annexation. As the 1891 campaign neared, Macdonald, anxious to have the electorate know that he was trying to do something about the McKinley tariff, leaked word that the Americans were willing to undertake formal negotiations, which would be aimed at Macdonald's goal of reduced tariffs on natural goods only—a moderate proposal compared to the Liberals. But Washington had not agreed to formal negotiations, preferring only informal introductory talks, and Blaine, anxious to help the Liberals, stung Macdonald with a vigorous denial of Ottawa's statements. "We have burned our boats," Macdonald said of the embarrassment, "and must now fight for our lives." Fight he did, as much against Washington as against the Liberals, because in this election, as they would be in the 1963 election involving Diefenbaker, they were both the enemy of the Conservative party.

Despite some American funding for the Grits, despite the attractive Laurier, despite the unhappy state of the Canadian economy, Macdonald won again. There was no mystery to the victory: "We worked the loyalty cry for all it was worth and it carried the country." But it couldn't have come any later: "The effect of the McKinley tariff is so disastrous," said Macdonald, "that if our election had been postponed until another harvest, we would have been swept out of existence."

The Conservative win distressed Blaine and Harrison because it removed all hopes of free trade and eventual annexation. The Ottawa-Washington relationship fell predictably into sustained acrimony, with President Harrison the lead player. When Ottawa's request for trade negotiations was finally granted, a team of Canadian negotiators boarded their train, steamed across the border, only to be informed shortly before they got to Washington that Harrison had changed his mind. Come back a few months later, the negotiators were told. A few months later they prepared to board a train again. But again, President Harrison made a last-minute cancellation. Finally even the antagonistic Mr. Blaine got to feeling bad about the situation and told the president that yet another postponement would be "considered a dodge if not a cheat and will injure us with our own people." In February of 1892, the negotiations were at last opened and then quickly closed. Ottawa wouldn't move from its demand for a limited reciprocity agreement like the one of 1854. Washington wouldn't move from its demand for a full one.

"Gentlemen," said Secretary of State Blaine, "there is only one satisfactory solution of this question. It is to let down the bars." After adjournment, President Harrison made a pointed summation to Congress. Every "thoughtful American" would agree, he said, that in a deal involving natural products only, benefits "would have inured almost wholly to Canada... It is not for this government to argue against this announcement of Canadian official opinion. It must be accepted however, I think, as the statement of a condition which places an insuperable barrier in the way... of reciprocal trade which might otherwise be developed between the United States and the Dominion."

Harrison's adversarial attitude was mirrored in his treatment of Canada on the Bering Sea dispute. Americans slaughtered seals for pelts on the Pribilof Islands in the Bering. Canadian and British fishermen slaughtered them at sea before they got to the islands. In a move devoid of legal sustenance, the president made a declaration tantamount to declaring the Bering Sea closed to Canadian boats. When a commission was appointed to look into the issue, a dispute which would drag into the twentieth century, Harrison and Blaine jettisoned the by then established practice of allowing Canadians on the British negotiating team. Only a technical adviser from the Dominion was permitted.

By 1892 when Harrison was on his way to electoral defeat, and

when Macdonald had finally been summoned by death's knell, twenty-five years had passed since Canadian Confederation and the relationship of the neighbours and of their leaders had moved from square one to nowhere. The grating fisheries and trade disputes still remained, the American annexationist sentiment still remained, the hostility among the leading personages still remained and through it all, the frustrations not only remained but had grown. And they were about to grow more.

CHAPTER FOUR

“I’m going to be ugly”: Tempestuous Teddy and Wilfrid Laurier

“WHENEVER CANADA RAISES a bristle, Theodore Roosevelt roars like a Texas steer and romps around the ring screaming for instant war and ordering a million men to arms.”

As the distinguished historian Henry Adams chose to note, Teddy Roosevelt and Canada were not intimate. The burly president, who fought bears in his spare moments, was sometimes driven to expend equal energies on his northern neighbour. The youngest of presidents, the most dynamic, the most colourful, the most prolific man to occupy the Oval Office, he bore no indigenous malice to Canada. But his convictions about his own country’s greatness and his own greatness were so overpowering that his thoughts transcended hunks of geography as undistinguished as the Dominion. In the face of White House wishes, Canada, in Roosevelt’s view, was not supposed to have knees.

Wilfrid Laurier, the Liberal prime minister who broke the Tory string in 1896, had a different view. Tall, graceful, white-gloved, he was more than just the physical opposite of the robust president. He was as fiercely Canadian as Roosevelt was fiercely American. In 1899 he visited President William McKinley, Roosevelt’s predecessor, in Chicago and delivered a speech entirely in French. Dumbfounded Americans interrupted, demanding to know what he was doing. Pointedly, Laurier told them a little story. He had spoken to a U.S. Supreme Court justice recently, he said, and the judge told him about

how superior the American system was to that of the Canadian and the British. Is it not one of the supposedly prime tenets of this supposedly superior American system, Laurier asked, that "freedom of speech prevails?" He would be speaking in English the next day if the man cared to come then, he said. To the lusty cheers of many in the audience who were his countrymen, he continued *en français*.¹

The fervent patriotism of Wilfrid Laurier would crash into the same in Teddy Roosevelt. The consequence for the continent was one of the most bitter disputes in bilateral history. When gold was discovered in Alaska at the turn of the century, a long simmering wrangle over the location of the Canada-United States boundary exploded. It was decided that an international tribunal would fix the location of the line. But Roosevelt, outraged that his claim was contested in the first place, rigged the commission in his favour and just in case the decision didn't go exactly his way even while rigged, he had troops put in place to establish the American version of the line. The protests of Canadians were raucous, but futile at the time. But a few years later, in 1911, Canadians would be provided with an opportunity to register their views on the treatment by Presidents Grant, Harrison, Roosevelt, and the others in a more meaningful form. In that election year, Canadians would be asked how close a relationship they wanted with the United States.

The Alaska uproar may never have happened had Laurier taken a more flexible, less political approach in 1898 negotiations with the McKinley administration. An opportunity, a magnificent opportunity, existed then to clean the slate of all bilateral disputes by way of one super commission.

Following Harrison's 1892 defeat, which most Canadians welcomed, a relative calm enveloped affairs between the two countries until Laurier's 1896 triumph. Four successor Tory prime ministers to Macdonald—John Abbott, John Thompson (who had signed an annexation manifesto in Montreal in 1849), Mackenzie Bowell and Charles Tupper—shuffled in and out of office so quickly that sustained policy initiatives were rare. In Washington, Grover Cleveland was back in office and, given his previous experience, was reluctant to get involved in Canadian questions. Laurier, whose country was entering an economic boom period, was prepared to make an effort to overcome the differences. Soon after the Republican McKinley took office, the prime minister visited him, sparking widespread excitement in the

American press. At last there was a different political party in power in Ottawa, the reports said. A bargain could perhaps be struck drawing Canada away from Britain first commercially, and eventually politically.

McKinley and his cabinet secretaries led Laurier into the White House Blue Room. There, Laurier proposed the idea of an omnibus commission to settle every outstanding dispute. The president and his men agreed it was time to forge a better continental climate. They would gladly consider the idea.

The new prime minister was a hit. "Sir Wilfrid Laurier," a top U.S. official told the press, "has not only been received by the Government with great consideration but has made an excellent impression upon all the gentlemen with whom he has come in contact. As a staunch Canadian statesman he naturally demands concession for concession. At the same time he has shown a liberal spirit toward the plan of increasing the commercial intercourse of the two countries and if he meets the views of the United States halfway there is a very fair chance of removing from the present field of view the most important questions which have produced so much irritation between the countries."²

After some weeks McKinley agreed to a twelve-member commission in which the Dominion side would actually have Canadian representatives. Five of the six would be from the Dominion and, in another striking departure from the norm, one of the sessions would be held in neither Britain nor the U.S. but in Quebec City. Strangely, however, having pushed for the commission and having won favourable terms, Laurier, who headed up the Canadian team, was decidedly pessimistic. "I confess," he wrote a friend as the hearings opened on August 23, 1898, "that I have very serious doubts as to any practical results." It may have been because he didn't really want results. "If my judgment is worth anything to you," Clifford Sifton, his outstanding cabinet minister wrote him, "I feel that I ought to say it would be a frightful mistake for us to make any concessions to the United States in the proposed treaty for which we do not get ample returns... I think it would be a serious blow to your popularity in the country and to the great confidence with which the people look to your control of the affairs of Government if any weakness were shown in this matter."

The commission came to swift agreement on many of the more minor issues: alien labour laws; control of inland fisheries; the boundary west of Lake Superior; conveyance of prisoners; and use of naval

vessels by Americans in the Great Lakes. The latter was a follow-up to the Rush-Bagot agreement of 1817, which limited the number of ships in the lakes, and has come to be regarded by students of defence as one of the first meaningful disarmament agreements.

On tariffs Laurier suddenly turned away from his earlier free-trade policies and, to the disappointment of the Americans, went the John A. Macdonald national policy route. He wanted reduced barriers in some commodities, but a more economically prosperous Canada had relieved the need for wholesale changes. Sifton strongly favoured protection as did Canadian business. Laurier remembered that the same William McKinley who now wanted free trade had, less than a decade earlier, slapped a record tariff on Canadian goods.

But by linking one issue to another, it appeared that some overall solution to trade, the fisheries, and the Bering Sea dispute was retrievable, until the two sides clashed on the Alaska boundary. In 1825 a treaty between Great Britain and Russia had set the boundary line in the largely unexplored area in a loosely defined way. When the United States purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867 the ambiguous boundary with Canada remained. The Dominion's position was that the line gave Ottawa possession of the heads of the inlets along the jagged coastline and therefore control of the important access routes to the Yukon River and the gold fields. Washington claimed that this was nonsense and, to most observers, the bulk of the evidence seemed to support its case. The intent of the Russians in 1825 was to have the line exclude Britain from the navigable coastal waters. London argued but eventually acquiesced, unaware of the significance the area would come to have. In the 1888 negotiation with the Cleveland administration, the British-Canadian side put in a boundary claim which Washington found excessive. Now in 1898, the Canadians were putting forward an even larger demand, saying they should be entitled to a portion of the strategic Lynn Canal.

Laurier realized the strength of the American position. "I think myself that we should have the line drawn at the entrance of the Lynn Canal, but on the other hand, the Americans are in possession of it and as you know," he wrote to Governor-General Minto, "possession is nine points of the law." The Americans, he said, "have very many qualities but what they have, they keep and what they have not, they want."

A compromise was almost reached. The United States would have

sovereignty over the Lynn Canal and Canada would be granted the use of an important harbour in it. But before the papers could be signed, details were leaked to the American press. On publication an uproar ensued, three states threatened to secede, and McKinley had little choice but to withdraw U.S. support for the proposal.

The commission had now moved to Washington where, like Macdonald, Prime Minister Laurier spent two and a half months out of his country, leaving colleagues in extended control. When no agreement seemed forthcoming on the boundary, it was decided that the best alternative would be to send the dispute to international arbitration. But this idea was scuttled when the Canadians would not agree to the proposed make-up of an arbitration body. The prime minister, feeling the Alaska issue to be paramount, then greatly annoyed McKinley by withdrawing all Canadian settlement proposals on the other issues. In effect, he was declaring the commission dead.

To Laurier, as he explained in a letter to Ontario Premier Hardy, there was "a question of dignity involved which must make it incumbent upon us to refuse to negotiate on anything else and this we will unless they give way [on Alaska]." The prime minister was fast joining the ranks of what was already becoming a Canadian tradition—heady, stubborn negotiators. On Alaska, he said, "the Americans are certainly in the wrong and I am not to be either bulldozed or bamboozled by them."

But it is far easier for a leader to be tough when playing to the politics of his home folk and Laurier's dealings with the McKinley administration were not without their political overhang. The prime minister was getting a lot of advice from the home front. Much of it was similar to this unabashed recommendation he received in a letter from the Ontario minister of Education, G. W. Ross:

"Nothing would please our people more than to be able to say that Sir Willfrid Laurier and his colleagues contended with the Americans for four or five months for a fair treaty with Canada, and being unable to make such a treaty, they were content to trust the future of Canada to the self-reliance of its own people."

The possibility that Laurier could go home with nothing and still be a hero was not lost on the Americans. John Hay, former personal aide to Abraham Lincoln, was secretary of state to McKinley and would remain so for another four years with Teddy Roosevelt. He was fresh from orchestrating a U.S. victory in the Spanish-American war,

a conflict which he dubbed "a splendid little war." He was quick to size up Laurier and other Dominion politicians.

"Their minds," Hay wrote, "are completely occupied with their own party and factional disputes and Sir Wilfrid Laurier is far more afraid of Sir Charles Tupper than he is of Lord Salisbury and McKinnley combined." The failure of the commission was because "they preferred to stand before the Canadian Parliament in the attitude of stout defenders of Canadian rights and interests, rather than as signers of a treaty which would not meet the views of their advanced supporters." Hay, as indicated by several personal letters he wrote, was bitter, and his bitterness would be slow to leave him.

In Canada meanwhile, the advice of G. W. Ross was proving to be well-founded. With this failed commission, Canadians were not complaining. Their "dislike of the Yankees" was understandable, thought the Earl of Minto, the new governor-general. "What the Canadian sees and hears is constant Yankee bluff and swagger and that eventually he means to possess Canada for himself."

"Personally," Laurier told Minto after the commission hearings, "I like the Americans." But, "I would like them much more if they were not so intensely selfish and grasping."³

The prime minister's visit to Chicago to see McKinley in 1899 came only seven months following the conclusion of the commission and it was apparent from the treatment McKinley accorded him that relations were cold. In celebrations marking Chicago Day—the order of parade carriages, the order of speeches, time with the president—Laurier was low priority, below that of Mexico's second in command, Vice President Don Ignacio Mariscal.

The prime minister had done little to ingratiate himself with McKinley with his intransigence in the recently concluded negotiations. On arrival in Illinois, Laurier compounded his difficulties by doing something that presidents and prime ministers never did—he made a partisan political comment and prime ministers never did—he made a partisan political comment on the other country's elections. Asked by reporters what he thought about William Jennings Bryan, McKinley's major Democratic party challenger, Laurier gave an honest reply, the second half of which did not amuse the McKinley White House. "Bryan's speech at the Chicago convention in 1896 was sophomoric," he said. "Since that time he has redeemed himself. I believe him to be a thinker and a philosopher."

Continuing his unrestrained behaviour, Laurier then made his

all-French speech. Moving, as promised, to English the next day, Laurier called on both nations to desist from unrelenting partisanship. With the president and the Mexican looking on, Laurier was scraping in candour, conciliatory in tone, and by all accounts "electrifying."

"Mr. President," he began, "on the part of Canada and on the part of the United States, we are sometimes too prone to stand by the full conceptions of our rights and to exact all our rights to the last pound of flesh."

On introduction, Laurier had been embarrassed by the glow of the reception. The American master of ceremonies had called him "one of ours." But the prime minister was buoyed. "Shall I speak my mind?" he cried. "Yes, yes," the large crowd yelled. He continued: "May I be permitted to say here and now that we do not desire one inch of your land. But if I state however that we want to hold our own land, will that be an American sentiment, I want to know? I am here to say above all my fellow countrymen, that we want not to stand upon the extreme limits of our rights. We are ready to give and take. We can afford to be just. We can afford to be generous, because we are strong."

Relations, he said, were "not as good, as brotherly, as satisfactory as they ought to be. We are of the same stock. We spring from the same races on one side of the line as on the other. We speak the same language, we have the same literature and for more than a thousand years we have a common history. . . . When we go down to the bottom of our hearts we will find that there is between us a true, genuine friendship."⁴

There had been a few talks to small groups but the Laurier speech was the first formal address by a prime minister on bilateral relations in the United States. Its conciliatory tone was noteworthy because Laurier had recently been savaged by the State Department in a way which would make the Kennedy State Department's criticism of John Diefenbaker on nuclear policy pale by comparison.

On Saturday, July 22, 1899, Laurier had told the House of Commons that if compromise failed, only two ways were available to settle the Alaska boundary dispute. "One would be by arbitration, the other would be by war. I am sure no one would think of war." Taken out of context, reports in American papers made the statement sound like Laurier was threatening war. On Monday the State Department issued this blast: "Canada has acted badly. . . . It looks as if the Cana-

dian premier actually prefers no settlement, even to the extent of a *modus vivendi*. Sir Wilfrid Laurier seems to be playing Dominion politics through these negotiations. Whenever the United States and the British Government have been at the point of making terms, the Canadian leader has upset the arrangement by some new condition. He has been so fertile and so fickle in his opposition to proposed terms of a *modus*, the conclusion is at last forced that he sees more for his partisan purposes in disagreement than in settlement. This Government will now let the matter rest and give Sir Wilfrid a period of uncertainty in which to play his Canadian politics. The remark of the Premier at Ottawa that the alternatives were arbitration or war need excite no uneasiness. It is a part of his local political program."

This abnormally undiplomatic and vivid swipe was only a sample of what the prime minister was to face when Vice President Roosevelt moved into the Oval Office following the assassination of McKinley in September 1901 in Buffalo. Roosevelt possessed superior descriptive powers and did not hesitate to use them. He once described Senator William Peffer as a "well-meaning, pin-headed, anarchistic crank of hirsute and slab-sided aspect." He harpooned a New York Supreme Court justice as an "amiable old fuzzy-wuzzy with sweetbread brains." Maurice Low, a reporter for the *London Morning Post* was "a circumsised skunk."

On the Alaska issue Roosevelt's posture was encapsulated in a comment to a British embassy official: "I'm going to be ugly." The new President, only forty-three, was irked by many aspects of the Dominion, beginning with the fact that it existed. He was disappointed that previous presidents missed annexation opportunities and he still clung to a fast-fading hope that the Philippines, which the United States had acquired in the Spanish-American war, could be traded to Britain in exchange for Canada.

Roosevelt also felt that "the Canadians do not like the United States." He had been surprised by the gall of what he perceived to be a war threat in the Laurier speech. In no way could he comprehend the slightest case for Canada in the Alaska matter. He was as adamant on Alaska as on any issue and with Roosevelt, adamant meant adamant. Once the mind was made up, for Roosevelt, it was hunting time—and on the hunt this extraordinary man was ferocious. "I had an interesting and in a way eventful hunt, killing 12 cougars and 5 lynx," he wrote Arthur Hamilton Lee in the year he became president. "I shot 8 of the

cougar with the rifle and killed 4 with the knife." With that introduction he moved to the Alaska question. "I have studied that question pretty thoroughly and I do not think the Canadians have a leg to stand on. We might just as well claim part of Newfoundland as to allow for one moment the Canadian claim."

In the first year of his administration there was no movement on the issue. The countries couldn't decide on the make-up of a commission and a pro tem arrangement for the boundary remained in force. But as news from Alaska suggested there were large deposits of gold in the region, the controversy took on a flaming edge. Laurier had feared all along it would happen. With great prescience he had written to Sifton in 1899 saying that he didn't want to leave Washington without an Alaska settlement. "The reason is obvious. There may be a discovery of gold in that section at any moment and probably there will be. Unless the boundary is settled here and now the most serious complications can arise."

As the speculation mounted, George Smalley, a London newspaper correspondent in Washington who sometimes acted as a go-between for the administration and Ottawa, told Roosevelt that new-found gold would likely trigger violence with the Canadians in the area. "What shall we do then?"

"I know very well what I shall do," the president replied. "I shall send up the engineers to run our boundary line as we assert it and I shall send troops to guard and hold it." But isn't that "very drastic?" said Smalley. Roosevelt regarded the journalist as "a copper-riveted idiot." He paused and exclaimed, "I mean it to be drastic."

The vital question of the make-up of an international tribunal to arbitrate the matter remained. In the summer, Laurier, who realized the Canadian case was not terribly strong, agreed to three members from each side. Previously he had objected, arguing that such an arrangement would only end in deadlock. Meanwhile, Roosevelt was vigorously opposed to the idea of any arbitration on the grounds that it would be a tacit admission on his part that the Canadians had a case in the first place. The only type of arbitration he was interested in was a rigged one. He wrote Secretary of State Hay, laying out the strategy: "It is difficult for me to make up my mind to any kind of arbitration in the matter. I will appoint three commissioners to meet three of their commissioners, if they so desire; but I think I shall instruct our three commissioners when appointed that they are in no case to yield any of

our claims. I appreciate the bother of the matter and even the possibility of trouble, although I think if we put a sufficient number of troops up there the miners will be kept in check."⁵

The fact that the Canadians had increased their claim in the area from 1888 to 1898 annoyed him immensely: "In a spirit of bumpitious truculence... the Canadians put in this wholly false claim. They now say that as they have got the false claim in, trouble may come if it is not acted on. I feel a good deal like telling them that if trouble comes it will be purely because of their own fault." And although trouble "would not be pleasant for us," the President wrote, "it would be death for them."

Months of polemic and a quick visit by Laurier to the White House finally produced a treaty in 1903 providing for six "impartial jurists of repute," three to represent the United States, and three, Britain and Canada. The rub was there: in the words "impartial jurists of repute." Roosevelt had no intention of honouring that phrase. One of his appointments was Senator George Turner, a man so impartial that he already had publicly condemned the Canadian position and had taken an annexationist stance toward Canada. But in comparison to the next appointment, Turner seemed a man without prejudice. Henry Cabot Lodge was a very close friend of Roosevelt's. He was an annexationist. He was rabid in his opposition to Canada and England. He had written on the Alaska question the following: "If we should agree to arbitrate there is nothing to prevent Spain from setting up similar claims in Florida, France in Louisiana or Great Britain on the borders of New York."

News of the selections rolled across the Canadian border like a hailstorm. Laurier labelled them "an outrage."

Jetisoning the established protocol of the day which still called for him to deal through the British ambassador in Washington, Laurier fired off a sharp rebuke to Secretary Hay: "... These gentlemen under existing circumstances cannot with any fairness be styled 'impartial jurists.'... They could not approach the question with an open mind, both having expressed their convictions that one side of the case is so strong as to render almost facetious the mere presentation of the other side." For Ottawa to grant legislative approval to the make-up of such a tribunal would be "humiliating."

Hay responded that Roosevelt had unsuccessfully tried to get Supreme Court justices for the tribunal. He didn't mention that the

president knew they wouldn't accept before extending the invitations. He argued further that it was impossible to find people without an opinion on the controversial subject. By impartial jurists of repute, Hay said, "we take it to mean men learned in law of such character for probity and honor that they will give an impartial verdict." At the same time, however, the secretary of state was transmitting his real feelings in a letter to Henry White: "Of course the presence of Lodge on the tribunal is, from many points of view, regrettable and, as if the devil were inspiring him, he took occasion last week to make a speech in Boston, one half of it filled with abuse of Canadians." Mr. Hay added that "the infirmity of his mind and his character is such that he never sees but one subject at a time... Of course you know his very intimate relations with the President... He insisted upon his appointment on the tribunal."

The appointments put the United States in a dim light overseas as well as on the northern half of the continent. It seemed as though the president, in the words of historian Tyler Dennet, was, throughout the boundary affair, "delivered into the possession of his most evil genius." Laurier, pushed by the public outcry, scourged the appointments in the House of Commons, blasted London for tolerating them and, in a move which prompted action by the president, argued vociferously the Canadian case in the dispute, staking out the position he hoped the Canadian commissioners would make in the hearings.

President Roosevelt was then prompted to issue personal instructions to the American side. "I write you now because according to reports in the public press Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the Canadian Premier, has recently in open Parliament made a speech... which is, in effect, a mandate authoritatively and officially given by him to the two Canadian members of the Tribunal." Laurier, he said, was turning his tribunal members into advocates instead of judges. Because this behaviour is "as far removed as possible from the judicial I feel that I should briefly call your attention to my view of the question which you have to decide."

His instructions? "In the principle involved there will of course be no compromise." By "principle" Roosevelt meant boundary. "The question is not in my judgment one in which it is possible for a moment to consider a reconciling of conflicting claims by mutual concessions."

While the Canadian protests raged on, the British government

went ahead and, in what the London *Saturday Review* called a “pitiful abandonment” of the Dominion, ratified the treaty establishing the tribunal. Laurier said that the move was “nothing short of a slap in the face.” It had the effect of galvanizing Canadian opinion against Britain as it already was against the United States. Writing to Canadian journalist J. W. Dafoe, Clifford Sifton said the Downing Street decision represented “the most cold-blooded case of absolutely giving away our interests.... My view in watching the diplomacy of Great Britain as affecting Canada for six years is that it may just as well be decided in advance that practically whatever the United States demands from England will be conceded in the long run.”

A few months following the British ratification an impatient Roosevelt perceived Canadian-inspired delays in the progress of the arbitration. In a move which clearly disturbed his secretary of state he then threatened to “bring the matter to the attention of Congress and ask for an appropriation so that we may run the line [boundary] ourselves.” At this even Hay, so bothered by Canadian diplomatic behaviour during his tenure, thought the president was taking things too far. In a strongly worded letter, he sought to cool Roosevelt down: “Dear Theodore.... I do not think they are acting in bad faith. They are availing themselves of every possible pretext the treaty gives them of demanding more time to patch up their deplorably weak case.

“I do not think any threats are at this time advisable or needful. We shall be as hard on them as is decent—perhaps rather more so.”

The Canadian tribunal consisted of Sir Louis Jetté and A. B. Aylesworth, both prominent lawyers, and one British member, Lord Alverstone, the chief justice of England. Henry Cabot Lodge, who viewed Canadians as “a collection of bumptious provincials” and told Roosevelt they were “perfectly stupid,” surveyed the situation and warned the president that his only hope was Lord Alverstone. Roosevelt, ignoring warnings from Hay that the case was sub judice, gave directions to his tribunal members, and through the use of conduits such as famed jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes, pressured the British government, insisting that if a favourable decision was not reached, he would use force in Alaska.

“I wonder if the jacks realize,” he wrote Hay, “that while it may be unpleasant to us, it will be far more unpleasant to them if they force the alternative upon us: If we simply announce that the country is ours

and will remain so, and that so far as it has not been reduced to possession, it will be reduced to possession, and that no further negotiations in the matter will be entertained.”

The tribunal sat for seven weeks, the crucial question being whether Lord Alverstone would side with the Americans. Otherwise there would be a stalemate. In the corridors, Alverstone met with U.S. representatives and let it be known that if they would yield on some small points, giving the Dominion a couple of islands, he would go their way. Roosevelt agreed, Alverstone voted with the Americans, and the final decision gave Washington almost everything it wanted.

The verdict, which was reached in October 1908, gave Canada only a non-strategic canal and two insignificant islands. It stunned Jetté and Aylesworth because they had been led to believe that Alverstone was with them on a number of important points. In 1871, Prime Minister Macdonald had voiced his opposition while signing a treaty with Washington. Now, Jetté and Aylesworth, with the support of Laurier, would go a step further. Having gathered in the cabinet room of the British Foreign Office, the tribunal members began signing the papers. Lord Alverstone handed the documents to Jetté and said, “Sign this, Sir Louis.” Jetté demanded, “What is it?” Alverstone said it was the award. “You know I will not sign it,” said Jetté. Aylesworth, his partner, broke in: “I thought we made it plain we would not sign.”

“Oh, I thought you would,” replied Alverstone. “And so did I,” Senator Lodge added. With that the two Canadians withdrew from the room, the necessary majority of four remaining to seal the deal. A statement was then released by Jetté and Aylesworth: “We... have been compelled to witness the sacrifice of the interests of Canada. We were powerless to prevent it.”

At a ceremony at Buckingham Palace, the Canadians were presented by Alverstone to King Edward. The King made a strong effort to get the two men to say they accepted the treaty but they would not budge. They shook hands, bowed, and moved away.

In Ottawa, Laurier spelled out the results to the House of Commons, placed a map open on his desk and, as members from all parties gathered around him, sadly illustrated the line the boundary would take.

Press reaction was scathing. “Led Like a Lamb to Slaughter,” roared one Vancouver *Daily Province* headline. “The Line Which We

Have To Toe," said another. The Toronto *World* cited Laurier's desire to settle the question on a give-and-take basis. "It has turned out that way," the paper said. "The United States giving and Canada taking it in the neck."

The *Buffalo Evening News* said the award demonstrated the craziness of those thinking there could be a North American union. "Canada detests this country most cordially and is now nearly wild with grief and rage because our contentions have been upheld." In London, the *Express* headlined the story: "The Great Surrender—Canadian Interests Sacrificed."

Laurier lashed out at the British as well as the Americans, saying that the episode was a prime example of what made "British diplomacy odious to Canadian people." The defeat, even though he recognized the weakness of the Canadian case, would anger him for many years. Lord Grey, the governor-general, would meet with Laurier on Christmas Day, 1907. He would note "the general attitude of the United States has wounded Sir Wilfrid deeply. He referred again, only last night, with much bitterness to the inexcusable action of the United States in appointing the three political partisans as jurists of repute, to the Alaska Boundary tribunal."

In Washington, Roosevelt and Hay celebrated, the president calling it the greatest American diplomatic triumph in a generation and excoriating the behaviour of the two Canadian commissioners in failing to sign as "outrageous alike from the standpoint of ethics and professional decency."

Hay paid tribute to Lord Alverstone, calling him the "hero of the hour. No American statesman would have dared to give a decision on his honor and conscience directly against the claim of his own country."

The secretary of state wrote his wife: "I can hardly believe my eyes and ears when I see how perfectly all my ideas in this great transaction have been carried out..."

"I do not wonder that they [the Canadians] are furious. But as Will Thomson used to say: 'Serves 'em right, if they can't take a joke.'"

From the same Christmas conversation with Laurier, Lord Grey was to note how deep ran the prime minister's disappointment with Washington. For Laurier it had become a one-way street. Ottawa was according the United States respect while the United States didn't seem to care. "He has more than once of late commented, and with

great feeling," said Grey, "on the marked difference between American and Canadian actions in relation to each other. He is proud, and justly proud, that since he took office 11 years ago, there has been no act on the part of Canada which has not been prompted by the greatest consideration for the government of the United States... I wish it were possible to say half as much for the Government of the United States."

After Alaska, Roosevelt seemed prepared to reconcile his differences with Laurier and Ottawa. He came to respect the prime minister, he grew excited about the country's potential, and he began treating Ottawa with civility. He sent warm, laudatory letters to Laurier, one of which began: "As an admirer of you personally and of the great and wonderful country at the head of whose government you stand..." When Laurier was in New York at one point, he invited him to come over and spend a night at the White House. In the period following his presidency Roosevelt poured praise on the Canadian war effort in World War I, saying that the contribution of his own country wasn't nearly comparable. To enthusiastic crowds he gave many speeches in Canada, one as a favour to Prime Minister Robert Borden. He was impressed by the way the country was governed, remarking in 1914 that "if Mexico governed herself as well as Canada she would not have any more to fear from us than has Canada."

Laurier, however, kept his distance. He could never reciprocate the warmth. The single clash over Alaska was too much to overcome and a shadow hung over the relationship between the two men, just as later one would hang over Lester Pearson and Lyndon Johnson following their 1965 clash over Vietnam.

The poisoned atmosphere did not mean there was no progress. Elihu Root, the third American member of the Alaska tribunal, was the new secretary of state and, taking a keen interest in Canadian problems, he sat down one day and typed out seventeen full-length pages on what he considered the sixteen major difficulties. Negotiations were opened on many of them and the groundwork was laid for important settlements which were made after Roosevelt left office. Root visited Ottawa in January 1907 and dealt nimbly with the Alaska issue and his role in it, showing some of the diplomatic ability which would see him win a Nobel Peace Prize in 1912. Despite the differences, he remained a big admirer of the prime minister. To Root "Laurier was a very wise and fair-minded man and his character had

a great deal to do with the fact that when the Great War came in 1914, there were no controversies left unsettled between the United States and Great Britain.”

One main issue that arose before Roosevelt was finished was Japanese immigration. The Japanese government was allegedly overissuing passports, and immigrants were flooding the Canadian and American west, getting jobs that citizens of the countries were not getting. Roosevelt was stunned one day when a Canadian visitor told him that the western Canadian provinces and the Pacific states were prepared to separate and set up a new republic if Washington and Ottawa didn't act to stop the Japanese tide. The president was struck by the quality of the visitor: "... a very capable, resolute fellow... a gentleman... made a very favourable impression on me."

The fellow was young William Lyon Mackenzie King and he was beginning, in an obviously impressive fashion, his rise to the top. On assignment as Canadian commissioner of Labour and Immigration, he had headed directly for the White House, unaware that the required first stop was at the office of British Ambassador James Bryce. The president commented on the oversight: "Canadian diplomacy, like much of the diplomacy of my own native land," he wrote, "is much on the *sans gêne* order, which has its advantages in getting work done quickly, but which can be carried to an extreme. I was much amused (this of course you must not repeat) that King had no idea he was to call on Ambassador Bryce. I of course told him that he must do so at once."

In formulating a heavily restrictive policy toward Japanese immigration, Roosevelt followed the direction advised by Laurier in a letter to him. The prime minister said the contact of Asiatic labourers with Caucasians always led to serious troubles and therefore the contact had to be prevented. Roosevelt couldn't agree more, saying there was no way Japan would allow masses of Canadian and American workers into its labour force.

King was immediately taken by the impetuous president. "A man of strong impulses, but they are true impulses... I must say I like his impulses." He heard Roosevelt speak to the Gridiron Club about his "walk softly, carry a big stick" policy. Roosevelt told the audience that the idea was to "deal politely, be conciliatory but carry a big stick." He went on to add, King noted, "politeness was all right up to a certain point, but if advantage were taken of it, then it was time to send your fleet into the Pacific."

In Ottawa the government leaders were concerned that King, whom they were trying to groom for great things, would get a swollen head through such eminent contacts. "I hope they won't make him conceited," Lord Grey told Laurier. "I know him well enough to give him a word of caution on this point."

Perhaps King needed a word of caution. His ambition was sent soaring by his meetings with Roosevelt. He observed every inflection and gesture of the president's, recording each one: "His delivery was clear, concise and direct. He speaks slowly, carefully, enunciating each word and with a sort of musical utterance at times. He has a habit of showing all his teeth both when he laughs and speaks. At the dinner he entered into the fun like a boy. He keeps himself erect and firmly set. His whole manner and appearance bespeak force and determination. There is an undoubted impulsiveness and strong tendency to combativeness... I have the greatest possible admiration for him."

Roosevelt had started King with words on the impending danger of war. The wide-eyed visitor concluded that indeed the world was on the verge of a major conflict and he elicited from his talk with Roosevelt a message for himself, a grandiose message.

"I feel it has been a golden day lined with cloud all over it," he wrote in his diary. "But the meaning of it has found its way to my heart. It looks as though I was to help preserve peace between nations."⁶

CHAPTER FIVE

The Missing Tact of President Taft

MOST LIKELY NO United States president loved Canadian soil so much as William Howard Taft. Most likely no president would be hurt so much by a decision of the Canadian people.

In 1892, Taft, then an Ohio judge, rented a summer cottage on the banks of the St. Lawrence in Murray Bay, Quebec. The place and its people immediately captivated the huge, affable man with the walrus moustache. Through the next four decades he would return almost every summer to eat hearty meat breakfasts, sharpen his imprecise golf game and delight the French Canadian townfolk with tall stories.

His cottage porch overlooked the river and each afternoon Taft would slowly pilot his 310 pounds into a yawning chair. He would sit there for hours breathing the pure air, following the flight of the gulls, watching the whitelish dance on the running blue waters.

When he became president in 1908, custom commanded him to refrain from foreign travel. Three months into office he was thinking about how he was going to miss his Canadian summers. "There is no place like Murray Bay," he wrote his brother, Charles. "If I only have one term, as seems likely in view of the complications that will be presented during that term, one of the great consolations will be that I can go to Murray Bay in the summers thereafter.

"Tell Annie [Charles' wife] that every once in a while when she

breathes her lungs full of that delicious air, she shall think of me and know that I envy her opportunity."

The habitants of the little village loved Taft. They would fondly refer to him as *le petit juge* and when he entered town they would raise their caps. Taft's birthday on September 15 was the closing event of every summer season. The Quebeckers would fill his cottage and celebrate through the night. When he was gone in the winters, they would stage skits with the largest, most jovial villager honoured to play *le petit juge*. But no disrespect was shown. Taft was their hero. Later when Teddy Roosevelt split the Republican ranks, thereby ruining Taft's re-election bid, they spat in disgust at how their friend had been betrayed. When Taft died in 1930, sadness swept Murray Bay. The townspeople lit candles in his honour.¹

The feelings in this little corner of Quebec did not mirror however the feelings of the rest of Canada. Nor did the wonderful village diplomacy of Taft extend to the rest of the sprawling Dominion. Just like Franklin Roosevelt, another president with a Canadian cottage, Taft wanted to forge a special, new relationship with the neighbouring country. His idea was a comprehensive free-trade agreement which, in economic terms, would forever weld the two countries together. For Taft, it was to be "the most important measure of my administration." It was to be "an epoch in our country's history."

Had he been able to work more closely with Laurier, and had the president and the prime minister communicated better, such an "epoch" may have come about. What did come about was not an epoch in Taft's country but an epoch, a declaration of independence, in the other country.

The free-trade issue had been somewhat dormant since the miscarriage of 1898. In the following years Canada was prosperous, riding a wheat boom. There was little pressure for change. In Washington, Roosevelt had been personally interested in an agreement but didn't like his chances in the still largely protectionist Congress. But by 1910, there was a change of drift. Duties were going up, a tariff war threatened, and American complaints about the high cost of living were increasing. Taft needed something to buck the slumbering image of his administration. The thought of open Dominion markets was appealing.

One day, while vacationing in Washington, Reverend James A.

Macdonald, the Toronto *Globe* editor, was introduced to the president. Not an average introduction, this one soon found Macdonald in Ottawa at the office of the prime minister. "Taft was almost in a panic," Macdonald revealed, "over what he could do to secure exemption for Canada from the effects of the bill the high tariff gang are forcing on the country. He wanted to know if I thought Sir Wilfrid would meet him to consider a reciprocity measure."

Taft wanted a meeting with Laurier in Albany, New York in March. Laurier, either ill or feigning illness, said he couldn't make it. Earl Grey, the governor-general, and Finance Minister W. S. Fielding went in his place. (The Dominion had an External Affairs department by this time. In 1909, Laurier had created one atop a barber shop on Bank Street. It consisted of a deputy minister, two clerks, a secretary, and an annual operating budget of \$14,950. But there was no External Affairs minister to represent Canada in foreign countries. In Washington the British ambassador was still handling the duties.)

Taft's message was that there must be a special arrangement with Canada. "I am profoundly convinced," he told his visitors, "that these two countries, touching each other for more than three thousand miles, have common interests in trade and require special arrangements in legislation and administration which are not involved in the relations of the United States with nations beyond the seas. We may not have always recognized that in the past but that must be our viewpoint in the future. Say that for me to the people of Canada, with all the earnestness and sincerity of my heart."

Lord Grey echoed Taft's sentiments. "Although living under different forms of free and enlightened government we are, so far as the real big things of the world are concerned, practically one people."

Taft and Grey got along famously. While behind closed doors the general points of a vast trading arrangement were being debated, up front and for the newspapers the president was challenging Grey to a golf match for the executive championship of North America. Taft, who took Grey as a special guest in his train compartment to New York, boasted that he had recently shot less than 100. But, the *New York Times* reported on page one: "the Earl was nothing daunted at this and accepted the challenge forthwith."

The Taft trade proposal was a call for the removal of tariffs on all natural products as well as some manufactured items. Lower rates would be applied to secondary food products, agricultural implements,

and some commodities. Touring the west in the summer, Prime Minister Laurier, now sixty-nine, found support for such a measure, particularly from disgruntled farmers who resented the extent to which high tariffs favoured eastern manufacturers. Like Taft, Laurier felt his complacent government needed a dramatic initiative. The defeat of the Liberals in the 1891 election when they proposed free trade was having little carry-over effect. It was a long time ago. Support in Laurier's party caucus for the measure was strong, support in the United States this time was strong and, as far as Laurier could ascertain, support in Canada was strong. On January 21, 1911 following a long series of bilateral negotiations, a comprehensive agreement between the governments was signed, leaving final approval to the respective legislatures.

In Washington, where a sardonic reporter described the agreement as "Taft's first policy," the president began selling it to Congress. In 1910, of \$376 million in total Canadian imports, \$223 million had come from the United States. "The reduction in the duties imposed by Canada," said Taft, "will largely increase this amount and give us even a larger share of her market than we now enjoy, great as that is."

The Dominion, he asserted, "has greatly prospered. It has an active, aggressive, intelligent people. They are coming to the parting of the ways. They must soon decide whether they are to regard themselves as isolated permanently from our markets by a perpetual wall or whether we are to be commercial friends."²

His reference to "the parting of the ways" was largely overlooked by the press. But unfortunately for Taft, he liked the phrase, would use it often, and reporters would pick it up. Initially the president reaped favourable press treatment on reciprocity. One reason was that the agreement would mean cheaper imports of newsprint from Canada for U.S. newspaper publishers. Beneath the surface, however, Taft worried. "I send you a copy of my message on Canadian reciprocity," he wrote Horace, his brother. It will "suit you, I think, though it may not suit any other of the 90 millions of people."

His real concern was laid out in a striking letter to Teddy Roosevelt dated January 10, 1911, eleven days before the pact was even signed. Taft knew then what the problem was going to be. He also knew that it was a legitimate problem. The letter read:

"The amount of Canadian products we would take," he wrote, "would produce a current of business between western Canada and

the United States that would make Canada only an adjunct of the United States."

He continued: "It would transfer all their important business to Chicago and New York, with their bank credits and everything else, and it would greatly increase the demand of Canada for our manufactures. I see this as an argument made against reciprocity in Canada and I think it is a good one."

His forecast was accurate but despite his awareness of the impending problem Taft was unable to work to alleviate it. Instead, his words and the wayward words of a congressional leader would only do the opposite. While in the cabinet of Teddy Roosevelt, Taft had always impressed the president with his diplomatic touch. "With Taft sitting on the lid," Roosevelt used to say in mock reference to Taft's ample girth, "everything will be okay." But this was not an accurate characterization of Taft, particularly in respect to reciprocity. The Cincinnati-born, Yale-educated man with the sparkling blue eyes that dashed from side to side with unusual speed, was as apolitical as any president. Taft abhorred the chicanery of politics. He had never craved the Oval Office. He always wanted to be a Supreme Court judge. There, his considerable intellectual powers and unchallenged integrity could be used in greater quantity. There he would not have to play so many political games.

In the Congress Taft had a man who sometimes didn't know how to play the political games any better than he did. James Beauchamp Clark was the Democratic party leader in the House of Representatives. Because his party had won a majority in the 1910 midterm elections he was about to be officially named the second most powerful man in Washington—speaker of the House. The Missouri-born Clark, who was nicknamed "Chump" in the United States and was to be nicknamed "Champ" in Canada, joined in a raucous February 14 debate on the reciprocity bill. He spoke the most damaging words of support that any Canada-U.S. legislation has ever received. "I am for it," cried Clark, "because I hope to see the day when the American flag will float over every square foot of the British North America possessions clear to the north pole!

"They are people of our blood. They speak our language. Their institutions are much like ours... I do not have any doubt whatever that the day is not far distant when Great Britain will see all of her North American possessions become a part of this Republic. That is the way things are tending now."

A congressman named Norris wanted to make sure of what he was hearing. "As I understand it," Norris said, "the gentleman favors this bill for at least one reason; that it will have a tendency in the end to bring Canada into the union."

"Yes sir," said Clark. "Have no doubt about that."

The speech had no immediate negative impact in the United States. The House voted shortly after it to approve reciprocity. In Ottawa, news of the vote, not news of the speech, arrived while the Commons was sitting. Government members interrupted the business of the day to applaud for several minutes. Prime Minister Laurier joined in. The opposition Conservatives were visibly nonplussed. They thought the reciprocity package would be a winner for the Liberals. "There was the deepest dejection in our party," Tory leader Robert Borden later recalled. "Many of our members were confident that the Government's proposals would appeal to the country and would give it another term of office."

Amazement and indignation accosted the news of the Clark remarks. Laurier decried the speech, British government officials ravaged it, and Taft issued a statement to clarify the situation saying: "No thought of future political annexation or union was in the minds of the negotiators on either side. Canada is now and will remain a political unit."

Sensing that this was not enough, Taft then arranged for Secretary of State Philander Knox to wipe away remaining doubts. "The United States recognizes with satisfaction," said Knox in a landmark speech on Canada-U.S. relations in Chicago, "that the Dominion of Canada is a permanent North American political unit and that her autonomy is secure." After forty-four years, Washington was issuing an official, unqualified, categorical statement of Canadian autonomy. Knox continued: "It is probably more true today than ever before that the weight of sentiment and opinion both in Canada and the United States, while desiring closer relations in all other respects, is crystallized in a belief that the present political separation is desirable and will lead to the best development of each nation and to better and more satisfactory relations between them."

In 1938 Franklin Roosevelt would be credited with the first formal declaration pledging American military support of Canada in any time of peril. But Knox, a Pennsylvanian and an attorney-general under McKinley, did virtually the same thing in his Chicago speech. "In the higher atmosphere and broader aspects of the situation, it is

certain that if there should be any great world movement involving the continent, Canada and United States would, as a matter of course, act in the most perfect concert in defense of the common rights of a common blood of civilization.”

Despite the assurances, Taft was clearly apprehensive: “That speech of Clark’s,” he told his personal physician, “has unquestionably sounded the death knell of the reciprocity pact and it was the plan nearest to my heart.”

“Bosh!” he cried out in a speech to newspaper editors in New York’s Waldorf-Astoria on April 27. “The talk of annexation is bosh. Everyone who knows anything about it realizes that it is bosh. Canada is a great strong youth anxious to test his muscles, rejoicing in the race he is ready to run.

“The United States has all it can attend to with the territory it is now governing, and to make the possibility of the annexation of Canada to United States a basis for objection to any steps toward their great economic and commercial union should be treated as one of the jokes of the platform.”

At the same time he was trying to beat down the annexation bogey, the president continued to make insensitive remarks that nullified his gains. “The bond uniting the Dominion with the mother country is light and almost imperceptible,” he said in the same New York speech. And, on another occasion: “Now is the accepted time. Now Canada is in the mood. She is at the parting of the ways.”

Such were the comments that were highlighted in the Canadian press. In the United States, they were not damaging. There, after a Taft speaking tour to promote the package, after he called a special session of Congress to deal with reciprocity alone, and after strained political infighting, reciprocity was approved. In a strange departure from the norm, Taft’s Republican members in both the Senate and the House of Representatives voted predominantly against the bill. But most of the Democrats supported the president on it. The Democrats traditionally represented lower tariffs, but in this case many were inclined to support Taft because they thought reciprocity would ultimately do him more harm than good.

The focus turned to Canada. Laurier had been so confident in the early spring: “The country is decidedly with us.” Time would bring with it a better understanding of the policy, he thought. Some more beating up on the annexation stuff would take its toll; the Liberals, in power for fifteen years, would continue their run.

“I don’t understand,” Laurier told his people, “that kind of logic which says that a man will lose his manhood by trading with a good neighbour. We stand on our manhood.... This talk of annexation is simply beneath the contempt and beneath the attention of a serious people.... Rather than part with our national existence, we would part with our lives.”

The eloquence was splendid, but as time passed, the Conservatives were finding increasing hostility in the population toward the reciprocity plan. Railroad, manufacturing, and banking interests of the East were lining up and organizing against it on economic grounds. And the “little man,” as much as Laurier told him no, was receptive to the annexation argument. So the Tories brought on filibusters and assorted delaying tactics to stem the rush of the prime minister’s legislation and, still confident, Laurier decided to challenge them at the polls on it.

“Bet on the old cock,” he told voters in Trois-Rivières, Quebec on August 17. “Soon I shall be 70 years old and rest, which I have not known for so many years, would be most grateful to me. But I should be ashamed of myself if I did not devote what talents I may have, and all my strength, to the service of the country.”

“I do not know what the future holds. It is said that the most uncertain things in the world are horseraces, elections and cockfights. But if I were a betting man I would bet on the old cock which has been winning for the last 15 years.”

He had tried to get through to Taft in order to have the president do more to diminish Canadian fears, but he didn’t do this by writing. Curiously, the two men exchanged a few letters on trivial concerns but not on the reciprocity issue. Instead, Laurier used an intermediary named John Hays Hammond. Caution Taft, Laurier told Hammond, “against creating the impression that there is political significance in this treaty.”

After its initial rejection of “Champ” Clark’s remarks, the White House found it difficult to understand how the fear of absorption could be such a grand concern in Canada. Indeed, Americans generally found the fear difficult to understand. Writing at the time, Teddy Roosevelt, in typically graphic form, explained the situation: “No human being seriously thought that this was a step toward annexation. Unfortunately three or four prize idiots of importance, including the Speaker of the House, indulged in some perfectly conventional chatter which, although universally understood here as being a rehearsal of

'letting the eagle scream' on the fourth of July, was apparently accepted seriously in Canada. And poor Taft seemingly cannot learn anything about foreign affairs and made some remarks that were as thoroughly ill-judged as was possible."

The election date was September 21, 1911. It was no secret what the thrust of the Conservatives' campaign would be. "I beg Canadians," said Borden in a speech typical of many, "to cast a soberly considered and serious vote for the preservation of our heritage, for the maintenance of our commercial and political freedom, for the permanence of Canada as an autonomous nation of the British Empire."

The question for Laurier and for Taft, who also had a large stake in this election, was how to allay the annexation fears. In modern times when the leaders could pick up telephones and discuss such things or pay a routine visit, strategy formation was not so difficult. In 1911, when telephones weren't around, and presidents didn't visit foreign countries, the chances of misunderstanding and miscalculation were great. Laurier wanted Taft to speak out and yet he didn't want him to speak out. Taft wanted to speak out and yet he didn't want to speak out. It could backfire if he did, and be construed as interference in a foreign country. The Conservatives might profit.

But conversely, would not a grandly staged, intensely publicized, blanket refutation of the insinuations kill the spread of the fire? The president hadn't issued a major denial since April and he had done much to spoil that denial by more talk in the intervening period about "the parting of the ways." Was not another statement mandatory?

The pressure on Taft began in the summer. S. R. Richard, a former Liberal member of Parliament from western Canada, cabled Charles Hilles, the executive assistant to the president, recommending an unequivocal statement from Taft on the meaning of "the parting of the ways." Otherwise, the Liberals might lose, he said.

"The President is willing to make his position very emphatic," the response from the State Department said, "but will not interfere without their [Laurier officials'] full knowledge and an intimation as to what they would have him do. Would it help the cause to have him explode annexation talk on a western trip in Michigan, Minnesota or elsewhere?"

A state department official, Charles Pepper, contacted Ottawa cabinet members. President Taft talked to British ambassador James Bryce. James Bryce talked to Laurier. Laurier was cool. Bryce told the president as much. Taft held back.

By September 7, the election two weeks away, the Tories gaining ground, Laurier, less confident of winning, had changed his mind. That day, campaigning in Sudbury, Ontario, he met Henry Appleton, a friend. A statement from the President, he told Appleton, could move thousands of votes to the Liberal column. Could you contact the White House?

Appleton contacted Pepper and Charles Osborn, who was the governor of Michigan and a good friend of Taft's. The president was planning a speaking tour before September 21 that would take him to Sault Ste. Marie on the American side. Laurier "personally desired me," Appleton wrote the Michigan governor, "to ask you and President Taft if it would be possible for you to give the public in your addresses at the Soo the correct version of reciprocity." He told them of the damage the "parting of the ways" commotion was causing: "I need only tell you that your addresses will be quoted largely on the 20th as it is the day before the election in Canada and, as Mr. Laurier has well said, if the right word was said at that time it would mean thousands of votes. . . . Trusting that you will not consider me presumptuous to present the matter as it was presented to me, I am. . . ."

The governor telegraphed Taft: "Your parting of the ways speech. . . is being used emphatically in Canada against reciprocity. Is it possible you would come to refer to the subject publicly in Detroit in a manner calculated to convey most clearly what you meant so as to disarm those who are misinterpreting it and thus taking unfair advantage?"

Pepper then wrote Taft's executive assistant on the timing of a possible speech. "Do it for the Saturday afternoon papers because they have no Sunday papers of importance in Canada," he advised.³

The president at this time was worried about a challenge from Robert La Follette to his renomination to lead the Republicans. He wanted the reciprocity win badly because it was an approach he wished to try with other countries and because the boost would help distance him from the challenger. "If we can only carry reciprocity in Canada," he wrote his brother Horace a week before the election, "we can put our whole case on an actual test." William Hoister, an acquaintance of Taft staying at the Windsor Hotel in Montreal, received a letter from the president about the same time. Taft wrote, "I am really very anxious to have Sir Wilfrid win and am very hopeful that he will because I do not think the people of Canada have felt the necessity for the uplift [from reciprocity]."

The plans for a blockbuster Taft speech appeared ready. But only a few days before the election, executive assistant Hilles was given some impressive news by a friend named John Stewart. "I have recently been in Canada," said Stewart, "and lunched with the Liberal manager who gave me the result of his canvass of the Dominion on the reciprocity question. It may interest you and is as follows... Liberal Majority—49."

Now the question arose—Was there any need for a speech by the president? Would it not be a reckless gamble? The Liberals were going to win anyway.

In Secretary of State Knox's office, a cable then arrived from John G. Foster, the U.S. consul general in Ottawa: "Confidential. The newspapers report President contemplates discussing reciprocity at Sault Ste. Marie and other frontier posts before the Canadian elections. Conservatives are trying to make out a case of American interference and will undoubtedly misconstrue if possible any utterance on this subject."

Knox forwarded the message to Hilles. Hilles informed the president. A decision was made: The president would not make a speech on reciprocity.

On September 19 he arrived at Sault Ste. Marie where he was greeted by large crowds including many Canadians who had come across the border, as some of them said, "to meet the man who was going to annex Canada."

Taft was friendly. "A gentleman from Canada. Glad to meet you Sir." He was pressed on the reciprocity issue. It is "sub judice" he declared. "I have sufficient sense of propriety to say nothing on the subject but merely to say that I am in a state of prayer and hope." Being on the boundary, he did what virtually every president and prime minister of the twentieth century would do: he paid tribute to the undefended border. "That 4,900 miles of boundary has no forts. We have no battleships. There is nothing here to mark the difference between the two countries save custom houses and some natural boundaries. Now that presents an example that might well commend itself to all countries and all nations."⁴

In Canada, as one of the most emotional elections moved toward verdict time, the big names were wheeled out. "The Americans are a great people," said Stephen Leacock, an economist and great man of

letters, "but fifty years ago we settled the question as to what our lot was to be with respect to them. We have decided once and for all that the British flag was good enough for us."

Rudyard Kipling issued a statement in the *Montreal Star*: "It is her own soul that Canada risks... Once that soul is pawned for any consideration Canada must inevitably conform to the commercial, financial, social and ethical standards which will be imposed upon her by the sheer admitted weight of the United States." Americans had already dissipated their resources, he said. Now "they are driven to seek virgin fields for cheaper food and clothing."

On election day, President Taft was in Battle Creek, Michigan. "They say we want to annex Canada. Huh," he said mockingly: "Gentlemen, my experience in this government has taught me that we have enough territory without enlarging borders."

He lashed out at some of the treatment he had been receiving: "I know that some irresponsible newspapers have called me a trickster and a swindler and say that I in some way deceived or played unfairly with the ministers of Canada to secure the treaty." But, "there wasn't any trick about it. The cards were laid on the table."

He told his aides that afternoon that he thought reciprocity would win. In the evening he moved on to Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he attended a banquet. White slips of paper were frequently passed to him at the head table and, with each, his countenance grew more grim. "Canadian election very close," a telegram at 8:40 P.M. warned him. "Conservatives now have 14 majority overall. Five cabinet ministers have been defeated including Fielding and Patterson, the framers of the pact. Result will be in doubt until the west is heard from."

At 9:08 P.M. there was no doubt. "Laurier Government and reciprocity beaten."

President Taft moved his large body sadly to the podium. "I have just been informed that reciprocity has failed in Canada," he announced. The audience members were against reciprocity. They applauded his words and then there were cries of "hush, hush." Taft chuckled a little bit. "I know there are a lot of people in this vicinity who want to see reciprocity defeated," but, he said, "for me, it is a great disappointment. I had hoped that it would be put through to prove the correctness of my judgment that it would be a good thing for

both countries. It takes two to make a bargain however and if Canada declines I suppose that we can still go along still doing business at the old stand." The people applauded him then and Taft waved his hand in appreciation of their consideration.⁵

A few days later he wrote indelicately to Horace: "The Canadian contest which was raging when you wrote has been settled... We were hit squarely between the eyes and must now sit tight. Of course I am very disappointed because I should like to have had this scalp dangling at my official belt even if I am only going to wear the belt for four years."

In Ottawa, Laurier was graceful in defeat, while new Prime Minister Borden saw little that was anti-American feeling in the Canadian vote. "In rejecting reciprocity, Canada has simply affirmed her adherence to a policy of national development which she has pursued for many years. The verdict was in no way dictated by any spirit of unfriendliness to the great neighbouring republic. No such spirit exists."

The Laurier cabinet met for the last time on September 26 and it concluded that the prejudice against the United States, inspired by Taft's "parting of the ways" speech and Champ Clark's mouthings, was the cause of the loss. "We have been beaten," Laurier said, "but I say again I have nothing to regret. We could not have refused that offer [reciprocity] and been true to ourselves. We have been beaten but we can keep our heads erect." Young Mackenzie King learned a lesson. "The moral," he noted in his diary, "is to make no appeal in good times for something better. It is only when people are hard up that they see the advantage of change."

Speaker "Champ" Clark was unrepentant. After his House speech had sparked the furor, he had tried to beg off, saying that his remarks were only half serious. Now a few weeks after the election in Fremont, Nebraska, he declared: "Nine tenths of the people in this country favor the annexation of Canada and I don't care who hears me say it. I am willing to make this proposition. You let me run for President on a platform calling for the annexation of Canada, insofar as this country can accomplish that end, and let President Taft run against me, opposing annexation, and I would carry every state in the nation."

President Taft ran for re-election the following autumn. He was ransacked, winning only two states. The only consolation for *le petit*

jeune was the granting of the wish he had expressed in the letter early in his presidency. He was now free to return to spend his summers in the place he loved—Murray Bay. In that corner of Quebec, Canadians were more friendly to him. He returned there every summer until 1930 when the habitants lit the candles.

CHAPTER SIX

Borden and the Fight for Recognition

EARLY DECEMBER, 1911, ten weeks after victory, Prime Minister Borden journeyed to New York where he lunched with Teddy Roosevelt. "Mr. Prime Minister," said Roosevelt respectfully, "I do not expect you to make an admission but I am confident that in your heart you are profoundly grateful to my friend Mr. Taft for some of his utterances with regard to the effect of the reciprocity proposals."¹

The prime minister concurred. Borden had won on the trade issue but he realized fortune had played a paramount role. Despite his own truculent opposition to reciprocity, Borden did not feel, deep down, that it was such a bad idea. Once, during the campaign, President Taft warned that if Canada didn't move commercially closer to the United States, it would be forever locked into a disadvantageous British imperial preference system. Hearing that, Borden told friends: "The most serious feature of Taft's utterances is their profound truth."

Now Canada's eighth prime minister, worried about negative American reaction to the vote, was anxious to reassure the country of Canada's friendship. "I recognize the duty of Canada," he told an audience on the New York trip, "to become more and more a bond of goodwill and friendship between this Great Republic and our Empire. It may well be said that for the cause of kinship and neighbourliness, Canada owes this to you. But I would rather put it on higher ground;

that for the cause of Christianity and civilization, she owes it to herself."

His campaign rhetoric had championed the British connection, but in office Borden would pursue a different course. He would try to reduce dependence on Britain, so that in future dealings with Washington, Canada could speak for Canada. The problem, as he put it in a letter to his wife, was that Canada was "a nation that is not a nation." The Dominion was independent in domestic policy but a vassal of Britain in foreign policy. This status was reflected on occasions such as the Paris Peace Conference which concluded World War I. French President Clemenceau, arranging for a session with Britain that would include Dominion representatives, told Lloyd George, the British leader; "Come—And bring your savages with you."

With Borden's stewardship, the pressures for change had grown strong. With survival on the continent, economic health, the trans-Canada railway, and with a significant contribution in World War I, the Canadian sense of nationhood and Canada's desire for an independent voice in the world, particularly in the United States, had been enhanced. The Canadian experience in Washington was a critical factor in giving rise to the demand for control of foreign policy, in expanding on that demand, and in bringing it to fruition. On many occasions, the most serious being the Washington Treaty (1871) and the Alaska dispute (1903), Canadian prime ministers or their associates had been compelled to negotiate with the White House as part of a British team and had been defeated and embarrassed as a result. The prime ministers had come to feel that if Canada was to lose to Washington, Canada was going to lose of its own accord.

The calls for independent negotiating status actually started soon after Canada was born. The pressure increased step by step, almost year by year, but it would be more than half a century from Dominion Day before the rights in Washington were won.

L. S. Huntington introduced a bill in Parliament in 1870 proposing that Canada be given the right to negotiate commercial treaties in the American capital. Prime Minister Macdonald, who had yet to undergo the Washington Treaty experience, blocked the bid. In 1877, Sir Alexander Galt, who was representing Canada at the Halifax negotiation on a price for the fisheries, warned the prime minister that it was time for seeking diplomatic status because "as colonials these arrogant

insulars [British] turn up their noses at us all." Later, during the 1888 negotiation with the Cleveland administration, a frustrated Charles Tupper squeezed Macdonald on the issue again: "I confess that from my experience in Washington the crass ignorance of everything Canadian among the leading public men makes me attach the greatest importance to our having an able man in a position to dispel that ignorance."

The presidents themselves did not actively seek to perpetuate Canada's colonial bargaining status. Many would have preferred to negotiate with the Dominion alone. British shelter for Canada, some felt, made the task of achieving a good, quick settlement much more difficult.

Secretary of State Bayard, the man who said in 1877 that the building of the railway had brought the United States face to face with a nation, explained the Washington view of Canada's diplomatic status in a letter to Tupper the same year: "In the very short interview afforded by your visit, I referred to the embarrassment arising out of the gradual, practical emancipation of Canada from the control of the Mother country.... The awkwardness of this imperfectly developed sovereignty is felt most strongly in the United States which cannot have formal relations with Canada except directly as a colonial dependency of the British Crown...."

"Nothing could better illustrate the embarrassment arising from this amorphous condition of things than the volumes of correspondence published severally this year relating to the fisheries by the United States, Great Britain and the Government of the Dominion. The time lost in this circumlocution, although often most regrettable, was the least part of the difficulty, and the indirectness of the appeal and reply was the most serious feature, ending, as it did, most unsatisfactorily."

President McKinley and Secretary Hay were frustrated in 1898 by having to find solutions to Canadian problems that satisfied both Canada and Britain. Teddy Roosevelt told Canadian lumber executives in 1906 that he was surprised Canada hadn't modernized its antiquated system of representation. William Taft wished he could have dealt more closely with Canadians on reciprocity.

Had Alexander Mackenzie, the first Liberal prime minister, stayed in power longer, the drive for change likely would have been much stronger. Macdonald, despite his annoyance with dealing through the

British, chose to resist such a move because he felt the support of London in Washington still gave Canada more leverage than she would otherwise have.

In 1892, however, the House of Commons passed a resolution requiring negotiations with England to begin on the subject. The British, feeling that the Empire would quickly be destroyed should Dominions like Canada be given independent treaty-making power, were reluctant but did make gradual concessions strengthening Ottawa's ability to make autonomous commercial agreements.²

The Alaska boundary decision, viewed widely in Canada as a farce, gave tremendous impetus to the push for more power. Laurier caused a stir in both London and Washington with a candid appraisal in the House: "I have often regretted Mr. Speaker, and never more than on the present occasion, that we are living beside a great neighbour who, I believe I can say without being unfriendly to them, are very grasping in their national acts and who are determined upon every occasion to get the best in any agreement they make. I have often regretted also that while they are a great and powerful nation, we are only a small colony, a growing colony, but still a colony. I have often regretted also that we have not in our hands the treaty making power which would enable us to dispose of our own affairs.... Our hands are tied to a large extent owing to the fact of our connection."

Laurier's creation of the Department of External Affairs was a partial response to the problem. In the same year, 1909, the International Joint Commission was formed for the purpose of arbitrating boundary disputes between Canada and the United States. Britain took part in negotiating the agreement but the IJC was a precedent breaker for Canada in that it was a foreign body in which Britain had no input on the Canadian side.

More strides might have been made under Laurier if not for the inspired performance of British ambassador James Bryce who eased tensions by looking after Canada's interests in Washington with far greater effectiveness than the likes of Thornton and Sackville-West. By 1912 Bryce was saying that "about 90 percent of all my official duties at Washington are purely Canadian business transactions." He felt that a Canadian minister should be appointed in his place, and so did the newly-elected Robert Borden.

The prime minister from Nova Scotia, earnest, even, and able, presided over a quiet first two years on the bilateral front. The

annexation furor had died down, the long-standing fisheries dispute had been settled by a tribunal at The Hague in 1909, the Bering Sea controversy was put to rest to Canada's satisfaction in 1911, and the new IJC was quietly solving problems that previously had been the bailiwick of clamorous, high-profile joint commissions.

But no sooner had the plate been cleared than World War I broke out, engendering new antagonisms in Canada-U.S. relations and thrusting aside minor business, such as a representative for the Dominion in Washington. The United States was three years behind Canada in entering the carnage, its per capita contribution in manpower tiny compared to Canada's five hundred thousand, and when U.S. War Secretary Newton Baker had the temerity to suggest that his country was "now in the dominant moral position in the war," there was considerable resentment in the Dominion. Roosevelt, the old Canadian enemy, jumped to his neighbour's defence. "We have no right to consider ourselves at a standing level with Canada until we have placed five million men in the field."

Borden took the same stand, promoting the Canadian effort on trips south of the border, while pausing occasionally to keep his wife Laura up to date on the latest fashions in Manhattan. "The New York ladies are arrayed in the most stunning frocks I have ever seen," he wrote on a 1916 visit. "But some of them are mightily abbreviated." However, he didn't travel to Washington to meet Woodrow Wilson until February, 1918. Before the visit, he was warned by an associate named James Dunn that Wilson, the former Princeton University president, was "the most stubborn man in the world. No matter how wrong he may prove to be, he never changes his views." Others viewed the president, Dunn reported, as "a Bolshevik at heart." The prime minister's own first appraisal had not been flattering: "Great rhetorician but a weak and shifty politician." It was to get worse.

On Secretary of State Robert Lansing, Borden had been warned by ambassador Bryce that talking to the man was like speaking through the telephone with the connection cut off. The prime minister's own experience with Lansing, the New York lawyer who had stated the concluding arguments in the Alaska boundary arbitration, confirmed this view.

The visit, which featured discussions on how to win the War, bilateral cooperation in the War effort, and Borden boasts on the Canadian contribution, went smoothly—but was somewhat dis-

figured by an event north of the border. William Jennings Bryan, the perennial presidential candidate and Wilson's first secretary of state was shouted down and forced to stop his speech by an angry mob in Toronto's Massey Hall. Many spectators opposed Bryan's prohibitionist leanings while others felt he was too sympathetic to Germany in the War. More than one hundred people wore gas masks. Bryan, a brilliant orator, was stunned. He tried to calm the audience with appeals to continental brotherhood: "The same blood pulses through our veins." He then used a phrase which John F. Kennedy would later get credit for coining: "God has made us neighbors." But there was no hope, and Bryan left complaining bitterly to a reporter: "There isn't a city in the union where there is any danger of my being intercepted" like this. The incident received front-page coverage in many U.S. papers, compelling Borden to issue a statement: "I observe with deepest regret the occurrence at Toronto last night but was glad to note it was due to various small portions of the audience."

Borden would next meet Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference in early 1919. American claims that "we won the War" rankled the quiet prime minister as they did his population. His effort was to get Canada what he felt was due recognition—independent voting status in the peace settlement and eligibility to the council of the nascent League of Nations. Wilson was his main opponent on both counts and Borden got straight to the point, sending him a souvenir edition of the *Montreal Standard*, extolling Canada's War effort. The president was hardly enthusiastic. "It is very interesting to have such a record of the important part taken by Canada in this war," he responded.³

The initial peace conference plan called for five voting delegates from each of Britain, United States, France, Italy, and Japan, two from each of the smaller allied nations, and none from the Dominions. Borden, normally a stranger to the employment of wit, muttered to associates about the need for Canadians to "hold our own with Patagonia."

He found Wilson "very tiresome" and "obstinate as a mule," and Lansing was "arrogant and disagreeable." The secretary of state remarked condescendingly: "Why should Canada be concerned in the settlement of European affairs?" Lloyd George promptly reminded him that Canada "lost more men than the United States in the War."

A spirited lobbying effort, spearheaded by Borden, led the way to recognition. The Dominions won the right to be represented by two

delegates each, and the right to sign the peace treaty in their own names.

In the League of Nations battle, Borden again directed the effort, demonstrating a passion for battle that few realized he possessed. A stinging memo from the prime minister declared that "the people of Canada will not tamely submit to a dictation which declares that Liberia or Cuba, Panama or Hejaz, Haiti or Ecuador, must have a higher place."⁴

When the name of President Wilson was raised during a Borden conversation with Lloyd George, the prime minister berated the president with such indignation that Lloyd George implored: "For heaven's sake, don't look at me like that."

Borden was more diplomatic in a note he sent Wilson about Canada's proposed changes to the League covenant: "... You will understand, I am sure, that it is my desire to be helpful and not critical. I fully realize the immense difficulties which have been overcome in presenting to the world this supremely important document upon which the future of humanity so greatly depends. I appreciate also the danger of undertaking amendments which may renew differences that the committee found it difficult to compose..."

With a big assist from Lloyd George, Borden succeeded in convincing Wilson that representation for the Dominions would mean domination of the post-war world by the British Empire. The victory was tarnished, however, when the U.S. senate rejected American participation in the League, partly on the grounds that Britain would wield too much power. A disgusted Borden concluded: "In foreign affairs the politicians of the United States act like children and do not recognize their responsibilities to their country and to the world."⁵

The peace conference taught Borden the difficulties inherent in being "a nation that is not a nation." In reflecting on that anomalous position he wrote Laura: "It is about time to alter it." And in the context of U.S. relations that is the field to which his battle now shifted.

Near the close of the War, a Canadian mission had been established in Washington for the purpose of coordinating war-related activities. The end of the fighting removed its purpose, but instead of disbanding the mission, Borden wanted it replaced by a Canadian office with a minister enjoying full diplomatic status. Wilson did not object, saying

that if it was okay with Britain it was okay with him. The president, despite being so exasperating for Borden at Paris, held no grudge against the Dominion. At a cabinet meeting in September 1920 he defended the Canadian pulp and paper industry, shooting down colleagues who were grumbling about high import prices. He said he sympathized with Canadian conservation efforts and, according to Navy Secretary Joe Daniels, argued that "newspapers had too much paper now." Daniels countered that "Canada was not trying to conserve but was robbing publishers." Wilson spurned him.⁶

Borden won 10 Downing's approval for a Canadian minister in Washington but there were catches. The Canadian would sometimes have to report to the British ambassador. When the latter was absent, the Canadian would have to move into the British embassy in his place. As a result, opposition Liberals decried the idea. Canada would be "establishing a kindergarten school of diplomacy," argued W. S. Fielding. "If Canada sends an ambassador to Washington he will degenerate into nothing better than a clerk under the British ambassador." Another member of the Opposition said it would take more than "pink teas and 10 o'clock dinner in Washington to make Canada a nation."

But Borden assented to the arrangement and on April 26, 1920, Robert Lansing, his American adversary, announced that the United States had agreed to Canada having direct diplomatic relations.

But strangely, after the long battle had been won Borden did not follow through with an immediate appointment. When he stepped aside due to ailing health, the promising Arthur Meighen succeeded him. Meighen, tied down by a sick economy, couldn't find a suitable candidate for the Washington appointment. Again it was delayed, though not due to any distaste for the idea on his part; later in 1921, he would rock the Imperial Conference with the declaration that "in all questions affecting Canada and the United States, the Dominion shall have full and final authority." But the Conservative prime minister wasn't in office long enough to put his assertion to the test.

Mackenzie King beat him in 1921 in yet another election in which U.S. tariffs played a big role. The Republican administration of Warren Harding was increasing the duties at a rapid clip and Meighen went to the country advocating a "brick for brick" customs wall to keep pace. King, aware of the lessons of the Laurier period, didn't push free trade but "freer trade," and won narrowly.

A man more continentally inclined than any prime minister before him, King would greatly change the face of the North American relationship in his amazing twenty-two years of power. Countries that were friends in name, and only sometimes, would become friends in deed. Canada and the United States would become, quite arguably, the world's greatest neighbours.

But before all this, in the initial years, when King was still feeling his way around and there was not a man in the Oval Office with whom he could closely connect, the bilateral initiatives were few. It would be six years before he moved ahead with the appointment of the minister to Washington—an extraordinary stall for a country that had so long complained about British representation and for a prime minister intent on tying the continent closer together. Among the explanations were: opposition in the Canadian Parliament; lingering antipathy in Britain; the lack of an appropriate man for the job; and the issue of total independence for him.

The major advance of the early King years was the signing of a bilateral agreement in 1928, signalling the coming to Ottawa of independent treaty-making power. To the displeasure of the British, Ernest Lapointe, Canadian Fisheries minister, and Charles Hughes, Secretary of State to Warren Harding, signed the Halibut Treaty, which regulated fishing in the North Pacific to preserve halibut stocks. It was generally recognized that such treaty-making power for Canada was overdue, and about to happen, but British ambassador Auckland Geddes wanted his name on the documents. Lapointe, with the strong backing of his prime minister and the support of President Harding, proceeded on his own.

The signing served to strengthen arguments for a Canadian resident minister in Washington, and King finally went ahead with the appointment of Vincent Massey in 1927 during the prosperous presidency of Calvin Coolidge. Coolidge was consistent in the bilateral context with his overall image—quiet, formal, boring. Massey found out how “extremely formal, even stiff” he was during the historic February 20 ceremony at the Executive Mansion marking his appointment.

“On arrival at the White House,” he recalled in his diary, “we were met by a covey of footmen.... When the summons came that the President was waiting we all fell in, according to a prearranged plan and moved into the audience chamber like a squad of guardsmen at

Wellington Barracks. On arriving we bowed low at the door, advanced across the room, bowed again and stood still—how still!”

Massey was then introduced to the president as “His Britannic Majesty’s Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to represent the interests of the Dominion of Canada.” Massey read his address, Coolidge read his. “Then we shook hands and there followed what was alleged to be an ‘informal’ conversation,” which, Massey noted, “resembled two public speeches delivered in alternate sentences to two audiences composed of one person each. The President asked where I came from, whether Toronto was near a lake and if this was the first Canadian diplomatic mission. I told him that my people came from Massachusetts originally and then came to Canada after a short time in Vermont. He said his people came from Massachusetts, moved to Vermont but stayed there. I suggested that there was only one lap left to be made. I gave him a personal message of friendship and goodwill from the King.... He replied in a stiff jointed sentence. After I could bear it no longer and the time seemed to have arrived to move, I begged leave to present my staff.... We then retired with Prussian rigidity.”

Summing up, Massey said, “the ceremony struck me as having stiffness instead of dignity and where it was meant to be impressive it was simply pompous. In other words, the participants were oppressed by their ritual.”

Prime Minister King visited Coolidge in November of the same year. Tom King, the Washington correspondent for the *Toronto Globe*, had warned the prime minister of the dour New Englander’s frugality and lack of emotion. The joke was that Coolidge had been weaned on a pickle. On arrival in the capital city, the highest dignitary present to greet the prime minister was the State Department’s second secretary. It was a step up from 1871 when the only person to meet John A. Macdonald was the British ambassador’s valet. King, accompanied by Massey, was introduced to Coolidge who stood motionless in a black morning coat. The president asked King if there was snow in Ottawa. He asked how long the prime minister was staying. He said he was glad to see him. The conversation continued in the same vein, until the prime minister bowed as he prepared to leave. The president asked again if there was snow in Ottawa. Said King: “It was the most formal ceremony I have ever been through.”

The next day, however, King was more impressed. Coolidge

“invited me after lunch to walk with him to the verandah of the White House looking towards the Potomac; told me it [the river] used to come near a present fountain, that Adams used to go in bathing there before breakfast and that once a woman reporter held him up for an interview while he was in the water. He said that if I had been Adams, I should have got out and put on my clothes and told her to make a story out of that.”

The anecdote and subsequent conversation changed the prime minister’s opinion. The president, who King described as dressed to “the pink of perfection,” was a man of “much clearer vision and thought than I had believed, a man very well informed, very careful in all his utterances and exceedingly astute... I regard him as anything but a silent man only.”⁷

The bilateral business of the day centered mainly on the issue of the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway. A proposal being advanced eagerly by a cabinet secretary named Herbert Hoover was to deepen the existing waterways of the St. Lawrence and build canals circumventing falls and rapids so that ocean vessels could move up the river all the way to the Great Lakes and the heart of the continent. Since part of the St. Lawrence served as the Canada-U.S. border, joint negotiations were necessary. Coolidge pressed King on the matter but the prime minister was wary on both political and economic grounds. “I spoke of the situation being parallel to that of reciprocity and that every evidence of eagerness from the side of the U.S. was certain to make our path more difficult. This he recognized very clearly and said so.”

From Ottawa, King wrote Coolidge, thanking him profusely and remarking how the opening of the Canadian legation marked “the beginning of a new era in Canada’s international relations.” Exaggerating, as he would often do with presidents, he continued: “It was our hope that it might be a beginning of closer friendships on the part of Canadians with their neighbours to the south. Such it has proven already to a degree that could scarcely have been anticipated.”

Not one to sidestep self-promotion, the prime minister sent a little gift to the president: “Under separate cover I am venturing to send you a copy of a book just published which contains a few of my recent addresses. When your official duties are over, its pages will let you see—should there be a chance even to glance them over—how greatly we on this side of the international boundary value all its expressions of international amity and good-will.”

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Last Voyage of Warren Harding

THE 15,000-MILE JOURNEY of Warren Harding, a journey which would include the first visit of a United States president to Canada, began on a hot day in July, 1923.

Almost everything about this excursion into eternity for Harding was wrong from the outset. The world of the twenty-ninth president was collapsing from without and from within, and he knew it more than anyone. He wished only to play poker and bridge and to forget the sordid circumstances of his life.

From without, he was being helplessly whirled into a slimy kickback scandal brought on by friends he had appointed to high office; friends who took advantage of his soft heart, friends who were swindlers, confidence men, influence peddlers. “I can take care of my enemies all right,” President Harding confided before his train left Washington station. “But my damn friends. My goddamn friends!”¹

From within, the overweight, fifty-seven-year-old Republican suffered from an enlarged heart, high blood pressure, shortness of breath, extreme fatigue and a torn family life. He had fathered an illegitimate child. His relationship with Florence, his wife, was in turmoil. In recent months doctors had warned he was in perilous condition. His flesh had come to look like wax. Shortly before the trip, as if he knew the end was near, Harding sold his Ohio newspaper, reorganized his investments, sold his farm, and made out a new will. “He was a corpse,” a journalist wrote, “essaying a pre-mortem tour.”

To the public however, the world of Warren Harding was all well. The emerging scandal, the health problems, the family problems were masked. To Americans, and to Canadians, Harding was a popular, attractive president. He had all the exterior trappings. He looked, acted, and sounded the part, he was tall and strong, his face had a carved-of-stone imperious look, and his voice was deep. His words, embellished by his training as a newspaperman, were mellifluous and majestic. He was a president who inspired confidence but who had none.

The tradition-breaking trip would take him through the American west by rail, up the coastal waters aboard the U.S.S. *Henderson* to Alaska, and home by way of Canada—a one-day stopover in Vancouver, British Columbia. In the 134 years since George Washington's first presidency in 1789, not one chief executive had travelled to Canada. It wasn't until 1906 that an American president travelled anywhere outside his country. A 1790 statute required all central government business to be conducted in the nation's capital. Another required the president to act on all bills passed by Congress within ten days. In the pre-jet era this meant the Chief Executive couldn't allow himself to get too far away from home. The tradition developed, the tradition remained, and President Chester Arthur discovered how serious it was when he went fishing in the Thousand Islands near the Ontario border in 1882, accidentally ventured into Canadian territory and, in so doing, sparked a controversy in Washington.

Not surprisingly, it was the brash Roosevelt who formally broke the tradition in leaving the country to view progress on the Panama Canal or, in his own words, "to see how the ditch is getting along." Taft also slipped down to see the canal, making an official stop in Mexico on the way, and the only other foreign excursion before Harding's Canada visit was Wilson's post-war peace trip to Europe. So bothered were some congressmen that a president would go so far away, they introduced a bill to have Wilson declared out of office while in France.²

Harding, the president who became noted for advocating a return to "normalcy," had no compelling reason to visit Canada. He admired the land, what he knew of it, and was most impressed by the country's performance in the War. He remembered in this context a "brave lad" who worked for him while he was publisher of the *Marion, Ohio Star*. The United States had yet to enter the war but the boy was

restless and he decided to go and do battle wearing Canadian colours. Harding gave him encouragement and best wishes. The lad went to the front and never returned.

Plans for the western trip did not include Canada initially. But after an invitation and further prodding by the government of British Columbia, Harding, in a decision which would prove unwise, chose to go.

From the beginning, accident, mystery and tragedy marked the tour, the Vancouver stop becoming one of the most controversial. In the first week, an automobile carrying two journalists of national reputation plunged off a Colorado embankment, killing both. Then Harding's railway engineer dropped off the president in Tacoma, just before running his train headlong into a landslide. He too was killed.

Aides tried to get the fatigued Harding to rest in the early days of the journey but he couldn't sleep. Instead, he stayed up nights playing cards. Poker was one of his favourite diversions. Every week in the White House he would have an all-night big-money game, and people such as Herbert Hoover, who felt the White House merited more dignity, would be disgusted.³

Despite the long games and the lack of sleep, Harding held up on the land segment of the trip. He was loved in rural America and the adulation of the crowds nourished his wavering frame. Rather than passing up opportunities to make speeches and meet the people, he made them all. Rather than let the advisors write all the drafts, the president did many himself.

But when he got away from the people and boarded the boat to Alaska, he became overpowered by gloom. Hoover, accompanying Harding, found him "exceedingly nervous and distraught." No government business was transacted. All that transpired was card-playing, around-the-clock cards. "As soon as we were aboard ship," Hoover recalled, "he insisted on playing bridge, beginning every day immediately after breakfast and continuing except for mealtime often until after midnight. There were only four other bridge players in the party, and we soon set up shifts so that one at a time had some relief. For some reason I developed a distaste for bridge on this journey and never played it again."

One day after lunch, the president asked Hoover to come to his cabin. "If you knew of a great scandal in our administration," Harding asked him, "would you for the good of the country and the party

expose it publicly or would you bury it?" Hoover suggested that he should "publish it, and at least get credit for integrity on your side." Harding said it would be politically dangerous.⁴ He described some of the corruption his aides had been involved in, the most notorious of which was to become the Teapot Dome scandal.

As the melancholy journey flagged on, Harding, receiving reports from home, became convinced the scandals could not be contained and his depression grew deeper. At Sitka, Alaska, the last stop before Vancouver, a military aide brought a box of giant crabs back to the *Henderson*. The president and other members of the party feasted on them. Shortly thereafter, one by one, they started to fall sick.

At 10:45 A.M., Thursday, July 26, 1923, a U.S. president officially set foot on Canadian soil for the first time. The welcome was stunning. More people, more enthusiasm than Harding had received from the American cities. Vancouver hadn't seen anything comparable in decades. The visit of the Prince of Wales three years earlier was a lesser spectacle. Estimates put the crowd totals for Harding for the day at 250,000. Little could explain his popularity but for the fact that he was a U.S. president who cared enough to come to Canada. "CITY FALLS TO HARDING" the headline across the top of the Vancouver *Sun* screamed.

The president was in a tailcoat and for the first time on the trip, his silk hat. Prime Minister Mackenzie King, who had met Harding a year earlier in Washington, was not present, deciding that the short stopover did not warrant a long trip for him across Canada. J. H. King, the prime minister's Public Works minister, greeted the president who, after stepping off the *Henderson*, made a brief statement: "I cannot let this moment pass without saying how gratified we are to come here and how gratified we are at being so cordially received. This is the first visit of a President of the United States to the Dominion of Canada and I hope it may serve to rivet the friendship between the two peoples which has always existed."

Harding was always good at cloaking his inner feelings in a cover of geniality and although some members of his party sensed he was falling apart, it was not apparent to the Canadian crowds. From the docks, the president moved through the joyous throngs to a gathering of fifty thousand in Stanley Park where he made his major speech of the day, the inaugural address of a president in Canada. With the sun brilliant, and the area festooned with American flags and colours,

Harding, though not as animated as when in peak form, delivered an eloquent, touching and, in parts, beautiful declaration of friendship.

"Let us go at our own gaits along parallel roads, you helping us and we helping you. So long as each country maintains its independence and both countries recognize their interdependence, those paths cannot fail to be highways of progress and prosperity...."

"Our protection is our fraternity, our armor is our faith, the tie that binds more firmly year by year is ever increasing acquaintance and comradeship through interchange of citizens; and the compact is not of perishable parchment, but of fair and honorable dealing which, God grant, shall continue for all time."

In the years to come, many of the words of Harding would be repeated so often as to become clichés. But to the people in Stanley Park who loved the speech, they were not old words:

"What an object lesson of peace is shown today by our two countries to all the world. No grimaced fortifications mark our frontiers, no huge battlements patrol our dividing waters, no stealthy spies lurk in our tranquil border hamlets. Only a scrap of paper, recording hardly more than a simple understanding, safeguards lives and properties on the Great Lakes and only humble mileposts mark the inviolable boundary line for thousands of miles through farm and forest...."

"We are not palsied by the habits of a thousand years. We live in the power and glory of youth. Others derive justifiable satisfaction from contemplation of their resplendent pasts. We have relatively only our present to regard.... Therein lies our best estate. We profit both mentally and materially from the fact that we have no 'departed greatness' to recover, no 'lost provinces' to regain, no new territory to covet, no ancient struggles to gnaw eternally at the heart of our National consciousness."

The president moved from the park through the crowded streets to a luncheon where he wasn't scheduled to speak but was moved to do so by the glow of the reception. Canada was where he could go to "borrow eggs," he said, and "I don't know anything better than a good neighbor to whom you can go to borrow a couple of eggs."

It was a warm day and now the worn-out Harding was on his way to the Shaughnessy Heights Golf Club for a match with his Canadian hosts. Spectators were only allowed around the first tee and the last green. The president was scheduled to play a full round of eighteen or close to it. But after only six holes, he moved over to the eighteenth

and finished out there. At the clubhouse, he jokingly told onlookers he had "been licked." They cheered him and he left quickly for his hotel, where his wife Florence waited. A year later Florence would reveal that on the golf course Harding had suffered the beginnings of a heart attack. She said those who knew he had grown ill kept it "a close secret" for the rest of the day. Later, reports also said that Harding gave up on his abstinence pledge on the Canadian links and drank heavily.

The press noted nothing untoward in the president's behaviour after the golf game, or during speeches in the evening. Articles said he played twelve holes and was in most jovial spirits at the conclusion.

The itinerary called only for his attendance at the state dinner that evening, but hearing that the local press was having a reception for the visiting press, Harding, already behind schedule, didn't want to pass it up. His surprise appearance was dramatic and the outpouring of affection from the press members extreme. "I hope that none of you will ever get it into his head that the newspaper game is a rotten one," said Harding, "because it is not. It is the best and the biggest game in the world... I entered the Presidency as a newspaperman and if the high office that I now fill has changed me, I feel that I am not worthy of that office." The journalists cheered wildly.

"I feel I could just be one among you all," Harding continued. Then he looked at the coordinator of the group and said, "I don't think it would take up too much of your time, would it, if I shook hands with all the boys?" He went through every one there. The "boys," as he called them, responded by singing "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here." They gave him three cheers and a tiger and Harding, the biggest newspaperman among them, left happily for the dinner.⁵

To Hoover, the president appeared "very worn and tired" in the hot crowded dinner hall but to journalist Joe Chapple, who wrote a book on Harding, he was "the embodiment of manly strength and vigor, bronzed by the summer sun of Alaska, with his premature gray hair... one of the handsomest men I ever looked upon."

Shortly after the meal, Harding had what doctors thought was an acute gastrointestinal attack. The initial belief was that it was brought on by the bad crabs and soon the diagnosis was that he was suffering from ptomaine poisoning.

That night his boat slipped out of Vancouver at 10:00 P.M. and

headed into a thick fog. A destroyer moved ahead as its guide but in the middle of the night, the *Henderson* rammed it. The president, who had gone to bed immediately on boarding, was startled, as were the other passengers. Major Arthur Brooks, Harding's valet, went directly to his room and found the president still in bed, face buried in his hands. When Brooks told him that the boat had crashed, Harding replied, "I hope it sinks." He got up and went to the deck. Order was restored and the *Henderson* deemed still fit enough to keep moving until morning.

In Seattle the next afternoon, Harding decided to go ahead with a major speech. He faltered badly in the oppressive heat, dropped the manuscript, grasped the podium and, with Hoover picking up the pages and prompting, struggled to the finish. Further engagements were cancelled, and the president was put into bed on a special train headed for San Francisco. A White House physician abided by the ptomaine diagnosis and said all would be well in a few days. But when specialists checked him on arrival in San Francisco, they discovered that in the last few days Harding had suffered a heart attack. By Thursday, six days out of Vancouver, his condition was reported to have substantially improved. By Friday, Warren Gamaliel Harding was dead.

His wife, who along with two nurses was the only person in his suite when he passed away, allowed no death mask to be made. No autopsy was performed. The belief was that the immediate cause of death was apoplexy.

Within a year, Mrs. Harding burned thousands of her husband's personal papers. Also within a year the president's physician died of strange causes while Mrs. Harding was alone with him in a room. Rumours that foul play was involved in Harding's death surfaced but none were proven. Gaston Means, a discredited ex-Justice Department investigator, published a book in 1930 strongly suggesting that Mrs. Harding poisoned her husband because of infidelity. He also hinted at strange occurrences during the Vancouver stop.

On the day President Harding died, thousands of shocked Vancouverites poured onto the streets looking for the latest newspapers, shaking their heads in bewilderment. In the Hotel Vancouver the people talked, the *Sun* reported, "in hushed tones of the big calm man whose purpose it had been to assuage the turmoil in a troubled world with his gospel of rationalism. They felt that his gospel was the true

one and that had he lived to complete his work he would have done great good for his country and the world.”

Ten thousand people in the city showed up for a memorial service in Stanley Park in the same place Harding had spoken nine days earlier. Vancouver journalists had an oil painting done of the president and presented it to President Calvin Coolidge, who hung it in the National Press Club in Washington. At the ceremony, Coolidge said he had just read Harding’s speech in Stanley Park and was moved by it.

In Ottawa, prime minister King wrote to Hewitt Bostock, speaker of the Senate: “I am so glad that the reception of the late President at Vancouver was such a splendid one and that it has left so many pleasant memories. In view of Mr. Harding’s death, the incident has assumed an international significance much greater than could have been anticipated....” Bostock had written the prime minister from Vancouver shortly after the visit to tell him about the glorious reception. “I hope we can manage that you get the proper credit,” he added.

In 1928, after thousands of donations from Canadians had been gathered, a ceremony was held in Stanley Park. The people of Vancouver unveiled the Harding International Goodwill Memorial. It was a tribute to the first president Canadians ever saw. It was a signal, following many decades of suspicion, that there was a place in the Canadian heart for Americans.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Hoover Wagons, Bennett Buggies

A NATURAL TENDENCY among the prime ministers was to seek the favour of the popular presidents and to seek distance from unpopular ones. No prime minister was more eager in the coat-tail game than R. B. Bennett, who faced Presidents Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt. But Bennett’s misfortune was his striking similarity to the disdained Hoover and his equally striking dissimilarity to the admired Roosevelt. In party, in pedigree, in philosophy and in some respects in appearance, the Conservative prime minister was a Hoover, a Depression-ridden Hoover. In the same respects he was the opposite of FDR. The predicament called for a face lift and Bennett chose to undergo one. But unfortunately the Canadian people were not fooled. They could see behind the disguise.

Much more successful at the game was Prime Minister King. Beginning with Theodore Roosevelt he had personal contact with seven presidents. The experience, combined with his political savvy, made him adept, particularly during the FDR years. But, before Bennett’s hard times with Hoover, King’s mettle in dealing with the presidents was also toughly tested by the depression president.

A millionaire, an engineer, a humanitarian, Hoover initially had a favourable reputation in the Canadian capital. The Iowa Republican was considered knowledgeable, decisive and positively disposed to the Dominion. But, as a Canadian journalist in Washington warned

King, Hoover was a “rampant protectionist.” He won the 1928 election running on higher tariffs for agricultural products, a policy which would be disastrous for Canadian farmers, and a policy which Prime Minister King himself noted would create “a deplorable attitude and feeling between the peoples of the two countries.”

To save his own re-election chances in 1930, King had to find a way of convincing Hoover to exempt Canada from such a tariff. His plan was to make a trade-off, to employ a seldom used tactic in bilateral relations—linkage.

A necessary ingredient for the execution of such a strategy is the availability of something for the president, something to trade off. King had just the item—the St. Lawrence Seaway. By happy coincidence the man in the United States most interested in the securing of an agreement for the joint development of the St. Lawrence Seaway was Hoover. This had been his goal since his days as commerce secretary in the Harding administration. He pushed for it then and, under Coolidge, he was chairman of the St. Lawrence Commission. To Canadian objections, he released a report enthusiastically endorsing the scheme. The deepening of the St. Lawrence, he felt, would enable 90 percent of the world’s ocean shipping to reach into the Great Lakes. “Its completion,” he wrote later, “will have a profoundly favorable effect upon the development of agriculture and industry throughout the Midwest. The large by-product of power will benefit the Northeast. These benefits are mutual with the Great Dominion to the north.”

Throughout the twenties, the Canadian government had been cool. The costs would be tremendously high. Ottawa had already invested large sums in a railway transportation system. Montreal would lose its status as the inland seaport. But with the crippling U.S. tariff threatening, King was prepared to reconsider. At least he was willing to suggest to Washington that he might move ahead on the St. Lawrence if he received an exemption on the agricultural tariff.

In a diary notation shortly before Hoover’s swearing-in, the prime minister sounded like he was in soliloquy, “Hoover makes his inaugural speech on Tuesday, a week hence. If I can win his confidence—which I do not think I have at present—I may be able to save the tariff being put up against Canada and a tariff war developing. In any event my clear duty is to do all possible to prevent this and go just as far as I can in indicating our intentions to proceed with the St.

Lawrence development... Hoover is wedded to that project more than all else.”

In order to ingratiate himself with the Hoover White House the prime minister warned how tough relations would be with the opposition Conservatives under Bennett. The Tory leader had been making pointedly anti-American speeches. In case the Hooverites hadn’t heard about them, King, quite capable of disreputable behind-the-scenes work, wrote William Phillips, the U.S. minister to Ottawa. “I think we may assume they [speeches] foreshadow a campaign of prejudice and antagonism on the part of the Opposition toward the United States, having in mind the feeling that may be engendered should the tariff later be raised against Canada. Every effort will be made by the Conservative Party to foster retaliation and to make as impossible as can be joint negotiations over the waterways.”

King sent Trade minister James Malcolm to Hoover to work out a Seaway-tariff deal. Hoover showed interest but while King wanted a discreet, unpublicized arrangement, the president wanted blatant linkage. He was willing to have a provision in his tariff bill which would stipulate that a Canadian exemption be put into effect as soon as Ottawa gave the Seaway the official go-ahead.

King wasn’t in a position to provide such a cold, hard assurance on the Seaway. The Hoover proposal, he told Vincent Massey, would be viewed as a Washington attempt to force Canada to accept something it didn’t want. But before he could quietly decline the first offer and go for something better, a story, hinting at the arrangement and embarrassing King, was leaked to the press. Now the prime minister had to make a public stand. Had he been seeking a trade-off? Was he willing to let the Americans have their way on the Seaway to prevent the possibility of a higher tariff being introduced by Hoover and gaining assent in Congress? There was no such deal in the works, no such possibility, declared the prime minister. In words which may well have astonished Herbert Hoover, he told the House of Commons that he could “conceive of no greater misfortune than that the question of the St. Lawrence waterway should be mixed up in any way with the tariff.” Each issue, he asserted, “must be dealt with separately on its merits.”

Hoover subsequently introduced his tariff. It was rejected the first time but made it through prior to King’s 1930 re-election bid. King, suffering because of it, was swept aside by Bennett who promised to

“blast a way” for Canada into world markets. But it was a most propitious period for another intermission in King’s record stretch as prime minister. The early thirties were the wrong years for anyone to be Canada’s leader.

Bennett had the misfortune of settling in at the same time the Great Depression settled in. The Americans soon had automobiles drawn by mules because there was no gas. They were called Hoover Wagons. Soon Canada had the same things and they became known as Bennett Buggies. In the United States empty towns multiplied and they came to be known as Hoovervilles. In Canada ghost farms multiplied and they came to be Bennett Barnyards. The links were natural not only because of the similar conditions in both countries, but also because of the resemblance of the two leaders. They both offered the same prescriptions. They were believers in the free market. There was no need for government intervention. With time, they thought, Adam Smith’s invisible hand would go to work. All would be well.

“Gentlemen,” Hoover told a group of relief-seeking visitors in the early days of the depression, “you have come too late. The depression is over.” To another group, he said “nobody is actually starving. The hobos, for example, are better fed than they ever have been. One hobo in New York got ten meals in one day.” To others: “What this country needs is a great big laugh. There seems to be a condition of hysteria. If someone could get off a joke every ten days, I think our troubles would be over.”

Bennett was less vivid but spoke essentially the same line. “I cannot make up my mind,” he told Albertans, “why this country between the lakes and the mountains should experience the depression, why people who have lived here for years should now find themselves without an accumulation of goods.”

“Governments cannot do everything,” he told others. “They can tax you and you can pay taxes, grudgingly or otherwise. But you must look beyond that.”

Hoover and Bennett had as much in common as any other president and prime minister. But the theory that resemblance breeds rapport did not apply here. The Conservatives under Bennett were like the Conservatives under most previous prime ministers. They looked east, not south. They were, as assistant secretary of state William Castle warned Hoover in Bennett’s first year, “less friendly disposed to the United States than the Liberal Party.” Because of this political

imperative, Castle told the president, “Mr. Bennett frequently finds it advisable to criticize us despite the fact that he is personally friendly to the country.”¹

Hoover was still determined to get the St. Lawrence Seaway built. He wanted to overcome any unfriendliness. He worked directly with Hanford MacNider, the U.S. minister in Ottawa, so much so that MacNider made a point of apologizing to state department officials for going over their heads. At one point MacNider had wanted to make a strong series of statements in support of the Seaway. But Bennett was in Britain and, out of respect for his absence, Hoover rejected the idea. MacNider was annoyed. “Now I suppose I must go around mumbling platitudes which is not my idea of a good time.”² The minister was soon given another assignment. Worried that Canadians had the wrong impression of the U.S. attitude, Hoover wrote MacNider on October 17, 1930: “It seems to me that we should think up some particular method or occasion by which we can mark our real feelings toward Canada and try to impress them with it.”

The first two years in office had not been easy ones for Hoover but he was by no means derailed. Hume Wrong, Canadian chargé d’affaires in Washington, on his way to becoming one of the country’s exemplary diplomats, analysed Hoover for the prime minister in the fall of 1930:

“My own belief is that the problems of the 1932 election are occupying Mr. Hoover’s mind to an inordinate degree. The great administrator, in elective office for the first time, is harassed and oppressed by the difficulties, the nature of which he is unfitted by his training and character to comprehend. He has as yet done nothing which will permanently prejudice his future; but he has also done little to confirm the reputation which he brought to the White House. If he is to accomplish great things (and of this I am growing more and more doubtful) they are likely to be postponed until his second term.”

Whatever the prime minister’s own opinion of Hoover’s future, one thing was certain—he wanted to have as little to do with the president as possible. So shrouded was Bennett’s one visit to Washington that the press called it the “mystery tour.” Secretary of State Henry Stimson found the Bennett act incredible. So anxious was the prime minister to be “incognito,” Stimson told reporters, that he wore a derby hat instead of the more formal silk hat the occasion would normally have warranted.

The ultimate snub occurred on the White House lawn. Twenty-five photographers prepared to take the standard picture of the president and the visiting dignitary. It was customary to do so. But Prime Minister Bennett stopped them. It would be “an honour” to be photographed with Mr. Hoover, he said. But since the visit is “unofficial” pictures should await another occasion. The problem, as most top officials there realized, was that Bennett did not want to be seen on the front page of Canadian newspapers with Herbert Hoover.

The meeting with the president did not go well. The president pressed Bennett on the St. Lawrence Seaway. The prime minister responded evasively, went to a press conference and told more than fifty anxious scribes virtually nothing. “What about the St. Lawrence?” asked one. “I believe it is still there,” Bennett replied. He did make one formal statement but added that it was not for publication.

The Washington *Star's* front-page story reflected the obscurity: “The confusion and uncertainty which has surrounded the visit to Washington of Prime Minister Bennett deepened last night as he prepared to leave for Ottawa. Even a trip by the Premier to Arlington cemetery to place a wreath on the Canadian cross there was surrounded by secrecy. Legation officials declined even to confirm that the Premier would lay such a wreath. A photographer who followed the Premier was requested to refrain from taking pictures.”

Most press reports took the same tack and they stung Bennett. He had been annoyed on arrival when reporters asked pointedly whether he or members of his party had taken advantage of diplomatic immunity to bring liquor into the United States, a country then in the throes of prohibition. His advisors responded testily that the prime minister had given explicit instructions against taking booze.

When the Associated Press, reputed for its objectivity, ran an article on his furtive behaviour, Bennett instructed Hume Wrong to fight back. Wrong wrote A.P. President Frank Noyes, complaining that Bennett’s footsteps were “dogged wherever he went,” that one reporter jumped into his car and tried to interview him and that reports were “filled with rumours of mysterious and quite non-existent negotiations.”

“...I can assure you,” said Wrong, “that these reports gave an entirely distorted version of what took place and were a wide departure from the usual standards of accurate reporting maintained at the Associated Press.”

Reporters would not believe there was truth in the announced purpose of the visit—an inspection by the prime minister of the Canadian legation. Hanford MacNider, besieged by the doubters in his Ottawa office, spent two hours fending them off. Undaunted by Bennett’s clandestine debut in the capital, the Washington press corps tried to get him to appear at its annual Gridiron dinner. MacNider said there was little hope. “He naturally doesn’t want to be running back and forth from here to Washington because he has been accusing Mr. Mackenzie King of the same thing through all the past years.”

President Hoover was irritated. From the disappointing meeting he felt he had at least elicited a small promise from Bennett to appoint a preliminary commission on the Seaway. “I was under the distinct impression,” he wrote Stimson, “that the matter would be taken up at once upon his return and that we would have some results. Nothing has happened...” He instructed the secretary of state to get the Canadians moving. MacNider told the president that the problem was that Bennett was trying to run a one-man government and had not taken the time to acquaint himself fully with the St. Lawrence situation. There was dissatisfaction among party members over his dominating ways, he reported, but “he shows no sign of changing his procedure.”

MacNider devised a plan. William Herridge, the extremely influential brother-in-law of Bennett, was taking up his new posting as minister to Washington. MacNider suggested that Hoover take Herridge away with him for a couple of days out of the capital and do the hard sell on the St. Lawrence. But the State Department, arguing hotly that every other ambassador in town would expect to go on trips with the president, rejected the idea. “It seems to me,” the undersecretary of state told Hoover, “that there would be plenty of opportunity to discuss the St. Lawrence Waterway with Mr. Herridge right here in Washington.”

After months of pressure, the Bennett government finally agreed to open negotiations on the project. Conditions were changing, the Opposition forces were softer, and the prime minister saw some political advantage in moving ahead with the job-creating scheme if the terms were right. In July 1932, four months before the presidential election, a treaty for the development of the waterway was signed. Hoover was ecstatic, calling it “the greatest internal improvement yet undertaken on the North American continent.”

But like so many other agreements notched between the leaders of the two countries, this one had a decidedly short life span. In the election, Hoover was crushed by Franklin Roosevelt. The Senate, which had not moved on ratification of the treaty before the vote, now rejected it.

Bennett, to his joy, had a new man in the White House. For that, the loss of the St. Lawrence agreement was not too high a price to pay. Just seven weeks into the Roosevelt term, he was in Washington to see FDR and the contrast was glaring. Now Bennett catered to the press, and sought out picture opportunities with Roosevelt. Now there was no scoffing at the prime minister's derby hat but rather, references to his sartorial splendour—particularly to his stylish, pearl-buttoned gray vest.

From the outset Bennett appeared to realize that he was dealing this time with a man on the verge of greatness. Bill Herridge, whose role would be critical in the next two years, had sized up Roosevelt for him in the following way: "There is no doubt that Mr. Roosevelt is confronted with a great opportunity and that he is eager to seize it. The country is begging for leadership.... Talk is growing of the need for a dictatorship; Mr. Roosevelt, if he has the skill, could assume the position of a constitutional dictatorship much as Mr. Wilson did during the war.... The country is anxious to take sides with the President against Congress in the perennial conflict which is inevitable under the constitution; and Mr. Roosevelt has both the authority within his party and a gift of popular appeal which are denied to Mr. Hoover."

Before the Bennett visit, the State Department had provided the president with an analysis of Bennett and Canadian-American issues. Among the points: Bennett's conservative high-tariff views had melted somewhat during the past two-and-a-half years and he is convinced that economic nationalism all over the world has gone too far; Bennett alone is powerful enough to obtain approval in Parliament for any program he wishes; Herridge has more influence with him than anyone; the financial community in Canada is teetering, the situation with the banking executives being that of a "small group of drunk men with their arms around one another, no one of whom could stand alone." A smelter company in Trail, British Columbia, was spewing poisonous sulphur across the border causing heavy damages; Canada must get moving on compensation.

Roosevelt wanted a trade requirement reducing the high Canadian barriers. It was to be part of an American free-trade push the world over. But the State Department warned against feeding the Bennett ego by negotiating the first agreement with Canada: "Mr. Bennett would in such circumstances be in a position to say to the people of Canada that he had brought the United States to its knees by tariff retaliation and forced us to sign a trade agreement."³

As it turned out the two men came to an agreement in principle to work toward a trade treaty. Bennett, the New Brunswick lawyer who had campaigned strenuously against reciprocity in winning a seat in Parliament in 1911, was now steering his government toward such a path. He found Roosevelt to be "kindness itself." The president ordered tea for two and as the delicate fragrance of Washington's pink cherry blossoms drifted by the sun-spanked White House columns toward them, the two leaders discussed, as Grattan O'Leary put it, "the hundred and one things the two countries have in common." Several world leaders were in town that April week taking part in a World Economic Conference. But Roosevelt made sure Bennett received priority treatment. As the prime minister was headed for an embassy reception one day, Roosevelt turned to him and said: "Bennett, where are you lunching?... I wish you would stay here and have a bite with me."

Bennett did, and by the end of the trip he was motivated to tell a national radio audience in the United States that Roosevelt was a man of "wide vision, unselfish purpose, steady courage and sincerity, rare patience and determination."

But no one expected that Bennett would become so taken by the man and his policies that he would undergo a political reincarnation.

Herridge was the catalyst. Beginning with Vincent Massey, the prime ministers would have a series of illustrious men representing them in Washington, but none would be so close to the prime ministers or quite so influential as Herridge. In the words of Dean Acheson, a future secretary of state who was then undersecretary of the treasury, Herridge was one of the ablest and most popular diplomats the United States ever received: "The first central and all important fact about Herridge was his vitality. It poured out of him.... Whatever he did was done with verve and often with a good deal of noise. To be with him was to be alive, to be moving, to be breathless."

The New Deal, Roosevelt's massive use of federal planning and government programs to relieve unemployment and the plight of the farmer and businessman, began in the spring of 1933. By the fall, Herridge, the master salesman, was trying to pawn a facsimile off on Bennett. The Roosevelt program, Herridge felt, was more bull than butter, but the important fact was that the public was buying it.

"This New Deal," he wrote the prime minister early in his hard sell campaign, "is a sort of Pandora's box from which, at suitable intervals, the President has pulled the N.R.A. (National Recovery Act) and the A.A.A. (Agricultural Adjustment Administration) and a lot of other mysterious things. Most of the people never understood the N.R.A. or the A.A.A. any more than they understood the signs of the Zodiac, but that did not matter much; they were all part of the New Deal and the New Deal meant recovery because the President had so promised...."

"We need a Pandora's box," he continued. "We need some means by which the people can be persuaded that they have a New Deal, and that the New Deal will do everything for them in fact which the New Deal here has done in fancy...."

"It has been said that on March 4, 1933, President Roosevelt was given a national instrument of extreme sensitivity upon which to play. It has been argued that we cannot reasonably conceive of a parallel situation in Canada, and that, at any rate, none such exists. I do not know how much truth there is in this, but I believe there is in Canada today a situation which can be almost amazingly influenced by the right treatment. I believe that the national heart at this time is highly responsive and will incline with profound fervour to the right sort of lead...."

"That alone you can give."

A young civil servant named Lester Pearson was also "intensely interested" in Roosevelt's New Deal. He watched as Herridge, in several trips to Ottawa, put the pitch to Bennett: "I was on the outskirts of those discussions, some of the most vigorous of which used to take place at lunch in the cafeteria of the Chateau Laurier, which became kind of a poor man's Rideau Club, for thrashing out radical ideas for a Conservative Government in a deepening depression." He wrote a speech for Bennett that contained thoughts "more likely to be popular with a socialist than a tory. I assumed that the Prime Minister would drop or alter them but when I got on the train with

him... I found that he had not had time to go over my draft." To the astonishment of party regulars and Pearson, Bennett gave the speech almost as written.

The election of Liberal Mitch Hepburn in Ontario was further evidence to Herridge that "old fashioned Toryism is dead." In his correspondence with Bennett he then became extraordinary: "We are now the Progressive Party. And by God, we must keep on the move until we find the answer to the question, 'what's wrong with Canada!' This is your job and no one can take your place. It is indeed, a trust! If we should let go now, Canada would sag back into a 'slough' which would rot her. Ease the strain and we fall to pieces. Hand over to inept, colourless and medieval leadership these fine people and they will break and turn upon one another. The Destiny of Canada is up for decision. And you are the judge."

"Deep down in your heart, you know that is the truth. And deep down in my heart I know what your course will be... I believe this—that you alone can save the day for Canada."

Whether Bennett was going to ape his New Deal or not was of no great matter to Roosevelt. What concerned him in respect to Canada was the Trail Smelter case and the St. Lawrence issue. He had William Phillips, undersecretary of state, meet for ninety minutes with Bennett in Ottawa over the pollution matter. Phillips won a promise that the prime minister would try and jawbone the offending company into behaving. But Bennett wanted the president to know that the problem was not Ottawa's fault. "I fully appreciate your difficulties," he wrote Roosevelt, "It might be well however if the residents and officials of the State of Washington would bear in mind that any injury which they consider they have suffered is not due to any act of the Canadian Government, but to the operations of a corporation in the province of British Columbia over which the Dominion as such has no jurisdiction."

Don't worry about the statement, Phillips told Roosevelt, it is "only for the purposes of the record and should not, therefore, be taken too seriously. He [Bennett] took the position that willy-nilly the Canadian Government was saddled with the problem." On the St. Lawrence, the president had modifications made to the treaty, submitted it to the Senate again, and the Senate rejected it again.

Finally, after hint upon hint throughout 1934, R. B. Bennett succumbed to the influence of Herridge and made the desperate lunge

to the left. To open the new year he announced the Bennett recovery program. It called for a series of acts, some constitutionally assailable, which would control prices, working hours and wages, provide unemployment insurance, and provide greater oversight on banking and marketing and mortgage foreclosures. It was a mini New Deal.

"If you believe that things should be left as they are," Bennett announced, "you and I hold contrary and irreconcilable views. I am for reform. And, in my mind, reform means government intervention. It means the end of *laissez-faire*. Reform heralds recovery. There can be no permanent recovery without reform. Reform or no reform! I raise the issue squarely. I nail the flag of progress to the masthead."

The announcement engendered incredulity. Socialists such as J. S. Woodsworth called the program a "deathbed conversion." The *Montreal Gazette* asked: "Is Mr. Bennett endeavouring to humbug himself or the people of Canada?" Liberal leader Mackenzie King, truly disgusted, bolted to the attack, calling the program one part unconstitutional, one part fascist and one part stolen from Grits of old. In his diary he wrote: "It was really pathetic the absolute rot and gush he talked — platitudes, unctious and what-not, a mountebank and a hypocrite.... If the people will fall for that kind of thing there is no saving them: they will deserve all they will get."

King did not have to worry. The people were not as gullible as he feared they might be. The belated attempt of R. B. Bennett to turn himself into a Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a dismal failure. The election result? Liberals — 171 seats. Conservatives — 39.

CHAPTER NINE

The Best Bilateral Years: Franklin Roosevelt and Mackenzie King

PRIME MINISTER KING was in his bed in Ottawa when the vision came to him. "It seemed to me the late spring or early summer. I was sitting on the grass in the sunshine. President Roosevelt was seated almost immediately opposite to me. A lady was standing nearby talking to both of us. The President had in his hand a new straw hat. It had a narrow cord hanging from it and he played with it in his hands. There was no band on it. The style was closely woven straw."

The president threw his hat to the prime minister. "I placed it on my head and, to my amazement, found that it fit me exactly. I said to the lady nearby that I had thought the President's head was much larger than mine. I was surprised to see his hat was a perfect fit."

As King awoke the vision was clearly etched in his mind. The need for more sleep beckoned but so did the message of the dream. The prime minister pulled himself out of bed. He took out a pencil. He quickly wrote down what he had seen.¹

What he had seen in Franklin Roosevelt was the good neighbour, maybe the best neighbour. He saw a president whose head was never too big for Canada or its crafty, sometimes neurotic, leader: a president who took the continent's two rival parts and did more than anyone to make them partners.

Like William Howard Taft, Franklin Roosevelt came to know the Dominion of Canada by spending time there. The year following his

birth in 1882, his affluent parents purchased a summer residence. It was on the small New Brunswick island of Campobello, which was nine miles long and populated by less than one thousand people. The breezes were cool in the summers and the blue Bay of Fundy waters cold. The rambling cottage had comfortable balconies, porches, hammocks, and big armchairs, around which the servants sorted the books and magazines.

The Roosevelts spent all their summers on the island and Norman Lank, a sailing instructor, took early notice of an eager youth named Franklin. "When he was just a boy," Lank said, "he could sail like a man of fifty. I knew then there was something more than common in him."

Charting his boat, the *New Moon*, bird watching, and golf occupied most of young Roosevelt's holiday time. Like his cousin, Teddy, he thrived on physical exertion. As well as being secretary and treasurer of the local golf club at the early age of eighteen, he acted as its greenskeeper, rebuilding tees and putting surfaces. Politics was the subject for the folks who gathered beside the sagging wooden benches outside the general store. Franklin frequently joined in and was there to hear some blistering debates over the Laurier-Taft reciprocity deal.

As his political career took shape, as he moved from New York state senator to under secretary of the Navy, he cherished the Campobello breaks, and in the summer of 1921 he was particularly anxious to get away from the Washington cauldron. A Senate committee investigating homosexuality in the Navy had put him through a messy, grueling few days, charging that he had knowingly allowed service investigators, or "fairy chasers" as they were called, to act as agent provocateurs in catching homosexuals.

Unnerved and exhausted, Roosevelt reached Campobello after captaining a yacht for too many hours through fog-bound Fundy waters. The next day he was fishing in the hot sunshine when the accident took place. "I baited hooks, alternating between the fore and the aft cockpits of the motor-tender, crossing beside the hot engine on a three inch varnished plank. I slipped—overboard. I'd never felt anything so cold as that water. I hardly went under, hardly wet my head, because I still had hold of the side of the tender, but the water was so cold it seemed paralyzing. This must have been the icy shock in comparison to the heat of the August sun and the tender's engine."

He did not feel right the rest of the day or the next morning. But

rather than rest, he ran, he swam, and fought a forest fire on a nearby island. The fight took many hours. Roosevelt chopped down evergreen branches for himself and his children and they thrashed away at the flames. "Our eyes were bleary with smoke; we were beggimed, smarting with spark-burns, exhausted," he said. Back at the cottage, the "glow" he normally felt after a hard day's work was missing. He took his mail and a few newspapers, and "sat reading for a while, too tired even to dress." It "never felt quite that way before." He went to bed, thinking he had a slight case of lumbago. But as he tried to get up in the morning, his left leg lagged. "It refused to work," then the other leg felt laggard and it, too, refused to work. His temperature shot to 102°F. His wife, Eleanor, sent for Doctor E. H. Bennett, an old friend. No more than a bad cold, said Bennett. Next day, Roosevelt couldn't move either leg. His hands were so weak he could barely write. He felt paralyzed from the chest down. A specialist came to the island, diagnosed a blood clot in the lower spinal column, prescribed heavy massaging, predicted recovery, went home, and sent in a bill for six hundred dollars.

Recovery didn't come. Roosevelt remained in bed, got his massages and felt worse. His spirits blackened. He felt God had abandoned him. Finally, two weeks after the fall from the boat, a Boston doctor specializing in a relatively unknown disease called poliomyelitis arrived. He informed the thirty-nine-year-old Roosevelt that he had it. He said it was not an overly serious case and complete recovery was a possibility.²

Roosevelt lay on the Canadian island, immobilized, for another two weeks. The pain was agonizing. It was in his back, in his arms and in his bladder which was paralyzed and had to be regularly catheterized.

The public was sheltered from the news. Reporters inquiring on Campobello were told he would be all right. In early September, about a month after the illness occurred, the Roosevelts stealthily had him removed from the island to New York city where the press was told he had temporarily lost the use of his legs below the knees but that there would be no permanent injury. At this point Roosevelt had already determined that he was not about to let the disease destroy his political career. When the *New York Times* carried a front-page story saying he would recover, Roosevelt wittily wrote Adolph Ochs, the publisher: "While the doctors were unanimous in telling me that the

attack was very mild and that I was not going to suffer any permanent attacks from it, I had, of course, the usual dark suspicion that they were just saying nice things to make me feel good. But now that I have seen the statement officially made in the *New York Times* I feel immensely relieved because I know, of course, it must be so."³

That September, when he left Campobello on a stretcher, was the last time Roosevelt would see his beloved Canadian summer home for twelve years. He simply did not wish to return. When he finally did, on June 30, 1933, he was president. "Memories of Campobello," said his son Elliott, "had been too painful, I believe, until this day. He decided that this was the time to exorcise the memory."

The emotional return of FDR to Campobello, marking only the second visit of a sitting president, was not without a special drama. As he did in 1921, Roosevelt had to pass through foggy waters to get to the island and, as before, he took control of the yacht himself. Visibility was so impaired this time that it was feared his boat would not be able to pass through Rogue's Bluff, off the Maine Coast, and that the homcoming would have to be cancelled or, worse, that the yacht would crash.

Eleanor Roosevelt waited on the island with concern. There had been no word from the presidential party. Residents and visitors, clustered at the dockside, worried a little, but were mostly optimistic. "Franklin will be here," someone would say, "he won't let us down." Slowly the fog began to lift and the doubts lifted with it. When word came that the presidential party was only fifteen miles away, tiny Campobello grew excited. The fisherfolk were in their Sunday best; the children waved flags and pennants; the anxious old friends of the president told stories while waiting to clasp his hand; the well-to-do summer residents, very much "Park Avenue" on this day, readied their cameras.

Since it was not an official visit, no Canadian government representatives were present. But practically everyone on the island was there and, from the site where polio had seized him, the welcome was rousing and genuine. "We well remember," said John Calder, a local official, in greeting Roosevelt, "the young man who roamed our shores, fished our streams and battled with Old Fundy's tides in his little sail boat."

The president looked back: "I was brought here first because I was feebing, 49 years ago. From that time on I came every summer until

12 years ago... When we came out of the fog at West Quoddy today the boys said there was land all ahead. I started full speed ahead because I knew it was Luebec Narrows. That is one of the things Captain Lank taught me here when I was a youth."

The welcome was "the finest example that could be given of permanent friendship between nations. I am glad that Norman Davis, our official delegate to the disarmament conference, is with me," said Roosevelt. "Now he can go back to Geneva and tell them what a border without fortifications means between two great nations."

Roosevelt spent much of the weekend with old Canadian friends. He boasted to Captain Lank about the crack American fishing schooner, the *Gertrude Thibault*, adding that he had a large, framed picture of it. "We got better ships than that in Canada," said Lank. The captain presented him with a picture of the *Bluenose* and Roosevelt said he would put it in his study alongside the *Thibault*. Chesley Allingham, the proprietor of the general store, was called in and he and Roosevelt reminisced about the store-front debates.

"I'll be back next summer," said the president on leaving. He took away many fond memories but also a dreadful cold which lingered for a week. He left behind a most gratified island population, a group of Canadians who sensed, although he was just four months into office, that this man was not an average president. "There is every promise," the Saint John *Telegraph-Journal* rhapsodized during his stay, "that he will occupy a place in his country's gallery of the greatest, alongside Washington and Lincoln. The phenomena of the last few months are as yet barely apprehended."

The popularity of the president was not a fact that would escape Mackenzie King at this time or at any time during the thirteen-year stewardship of FDR. After he won re-election in October, 1935, it took only one day before King was at the door of Norman Armour, the American minister to Ottawa, asking for an audience with the president. Specifically, he wanted to open negotiations for a new liberalized trade agreement which would help alleviate the depression. He was prepared to go to Washington right away, he told Armour. He explained how he thought Canada, in future, could be of great use as an intermediary between the United States and Great Britain. He wanted to have far closer relations with the United States than had past Canadian governments. "I am not in favor of annexation," he told the minister, as if it was still considered a viable option. "I don't

think that would be good for either country. Certainly you have enough troubles of your own without wanting to add us to them." But closer economic and political cooperation was vital, he said, and the trade agreement was the place to start. The prospect of Canada and the United States proclaiming a trade agreement within a few weeks, while Britain looked helplessly on, "seemed to give him almost malicious pleasure," Armour recalled.

Two weeks later, King was in Washington and it was here, during the first of eighteen visits, that the friendship began. The two leaders had one big thing in common. They were Harvard men. King attended the illustrious institution at the close of the nineteenth century; Roosevelt at the beginning of the twentieth. Although their frequent future references would make it sound like they were classmates, they never met as students. They met at Harvard only once, during the war, when King was there to receive an honorary degree and Roosevelt was a member of the board of overseers. That was the only in-person contact prior to 1935. In 1929 King, as prime minister, had communicated by letter with Roosevelt, then governor of New York but it was a rebuff. Roosevelt had written, saying he would like to stop by and discuss the St. Lawrence Seaway proposal. King said no: "The leader of the Opposition and the conservative press... assert that I am prepared if need be to sacrifice Canadian interests... Any act on my part which in any way is capable as being construed as one having a bearing upon the existing controversy is bound to be misinterpreted and magnified out of all proportion."

Before the visit advisors had told Roosevelt about King's nature. "Inclined far more to play the game with us," was one description. "Inclined to indulge in poetic licence," was another. King's "pet idea," as they put it, was to nourish Canada's role as the go-between on U.S.-British relations.⁴ There were no references to the bizarre underside of the prime minister—to his trust in his dog Pat, his contact with the spirits, his omnipresent superstitions, and to his excessive lust for being among the world's greats. These aspects of his makeup were well sheltered. The only reference to anything odd about the man was a statement in a memo that on reaching Washington he requires a day's rest period before feeling capable of doing business properly.

It was during his rest period before the first session with FDR that another vision came to King. This one featured him and the president

driving golf balls around a White House room. Two others were present, and Roosevelt was more interested in watching them than in playing himself. As for the prime minister: "I was feeling a little reticent about not having played the game before, but prepared to join in."

The significance of this vision for King was that in the game of public life, he and Roosevelt should see primarily to their figurehead roles while letting the experts in the game take care of the details. It was a lesson that neither would heed.

On meeting, the president and the prime minister went on at length about their Harvard days and forever after, Roosevelt, in alluding to King, would almost always draw the link, sometimes going so far as to suggest they were teenage buddies. ("As you know," he wrote Australian Prime Minister John Curtin, "I have been close to Mackenzie King almost since we were boys.") Had he been so close he would have known that no one called the prime minister by the first name ("Mackenzie.") After the chat, the president wanted to exercise his afflicted limbs with a swim in the White House pool. He invited the prime minister to come along. But as King would do virtually every other time he was asked swimming, he declined. This time it was because he was tired, in need of yet more rest. Eleanor, who spoke admiringly of Quebec's Gaspé peninsula, showed King to his room, pointing out that it was the one in which Lincoln signed the proclamation for the emancipation of the slaves. King was slaving when Roosevelt's son, home from Harvard for a couple of days, came in for a bath. Talking to him, King found it all quite extraordinary. "It recalled to my mind the circumstances of the descendants of Wolfe and Montcalm becoming acquainted in a bathroom at the Chateau Frontenac about three hundred years after."

After dinner, Roosevelt gave a toast. "Having an old friend here and one who comes from a neighboring friendly country, I should like to propose the health of the sovereign, King George,"⁵ he said. "We all rose and drank to the King's health," Prime Minister King noted. "When one recalls that the United States was lost to England, and to one of the Georges, with Washington the leader of the struggle for American independence, it was a rather striking circumstance that another King George's health should be proposed, the occasion being what it was."

Following a White House movie, Roosevelt asked King and Secre-

tary of State Cordell Hull to join him in a room off the hall. The president, as King recorded, "was assisted to his seat on the sofa by an attendant and when sitting down, knocked over the ashtray. Both his lower limbs are between steel supports. He manages pretty well with a cane but it is with the greatest difficulty that he gets up and down."

On the couch, Roosevelt beckoned, "come and sit here, Prime Minister." He meant next to him on his right side. Always when they spoke, the president would want King in that same place. But King, feeling uncomfortable, would frequently get up and move to a chair directly across from him. He never realized until the end that Roosevelt only had one good ear—the right one.

The conversation opened with Secretary Hull holding forth on what a great smoker he had been until his tonsils were removed, compelling him to give it up. Having talked about so many other subjects, King was anxious to get on to trade. When FDR was interrupted by the telephone, King asked Hull if it would be wise to start in on it. Hull advised patience, but when Roosevelt finished, he opened the trade subject himself. The three then entered into a long detailed discussion about cream, lumber, potatoes, and cattle. Roosevelt knew the particulars of trade in respect to them all and King realized then that here was a man who could golf his own way around a room.

An agreement for reciprocal trade had eluded all presidents and prime ministers since Confederation. The last pact was the treaty of 1854 which was abrogated in 1866. The years of trying had brought years of turmoil. King himself had found his 1930 re-election chances badly weakened by the record-breaking Smoot-Hawley tariff of the same year. Bennett had tried unsuccessfully for a tariff agreement with Roosevelt to bolster his 1935 election bid but couldn't pull one off. Smoot-Hawley, in combination with the depression, had sent bilateral trade spiralling downward to the point where by 1934 it was only one third of the 1928 level. Both sides realized that increased trade would mean increased prosperity. Roosevelt wanted an agreement, Hull was an ardent free-trade advocate, and in Ottawa, the United States had a much respected representative who was convinced that the time was critical. Go now, Norman Armour advised the White House in a significant memorandum, or Canada would be forever drawn into the British orbit: "Is it not vitally important for our political future that we have next to us a Canada interested in

developing her trade with the United States, interested in supporting our policies in regard to Latin America, possibly as a member of a Pan American Union, the Far East and elsewhere, and feeling that in a thousand and one ways they are bound to us in practical things even though sentimentally and politically they are part of the British Empire?"

High tariffs, he argued, were leading to the Canadian development of competitive products and industries: "It does seem to me inevitable that this development should continue to such an extent that Canada, equipped with low-priced French-Canadian and other labor, may become before long our most intensive competitor abroad in many spheres of agriculture and industry.

"There is still time, while the Canadian economy is in a formative stage, to shift the impetus away from highly competitive production to complementary production."

This memo was to William Phillips, the undersecretary of state. Arguing that it would be a "real tragedy" if the opportunity was not grasped now, Armour asked forgiveness for being so personal and pleading in his remarks.⁶

Concluding the long discussion with King on the trade commodities, the president then said to him: "Mr. King, all these three, cattle, cream and potatoes are political. If the campaign were over, I would feel we would have no difficulty with regard to them." He was referring to his own 1936 re-election campaign. King, who knew American politics, was prepared for such a line of argument. His strategy was to seal the deal that very weekend so that the question would not ride unsettled into the election campaign. He felt an added lure was the fact that it was Armistice Day weekend. If the agreement was reached on the Monday holiday, he told the president, it could be a lesson for the world. He described his argument in his diary: "If we could give to the world an object lesson of the new world developing the arts of peace, while the old world was bent on destruction, it might be the means of changing the whole world situation.... It would certainly point the way to the breaking down of the false doctrines of economic nationalism, which were the main cause of war."

Roosevelt loved the Armistice Day symbolism. "That would be a great stroke," he said. Plans were made to have the respective staffs sort out the fine points over the following two days, Saturday and Sunday. King, delighted, did not want to keep the president up any

longer. It was almost midnight but Roosevelt stretched the conversation for another forty-five minutes. In the morning, the prime minister felt sufficiently unabashed to produce a copy of his book, *Industry and Humanity*, but Roosevelt surprised him saying he already owned a copy and knew it well. He had a secretary bring it in so that King could sign it. King could hardly have been more impressed.

That day, Roosevelt met with his cabinet and told them he was negotiating a treaty with King that was distinctly to the advantage of the United States. He later ordered all cabinet secretaries to attend the signing. Most did so willingly except for the woman member, Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, who wouldn't stop talking throughout the ceremony, greatly annoying colleagues like Harold Ickes with her criticisms. "I hope," said Roosevelt, in making the Armistice Day announcement, "that this good example will reach around the world some day, for the power of good example is the strongest force in the world. It surpasses preachments; it excels good resolutions; it is far better than agreements unfulfilled."

King was in wonderland. In his diary he said the treaty was "the greatest political achievement of my life and one of the greatest of this continent in a century or more." He sent the first of many absolutely fawning letters to Roosevelt: "May I say that no visit anywhere, at any time, has left memories which will be longer cherished... May I add how delighted I was to renew with yourself an acquaintance having so memorable an association with Harvard University, and to have it grow into what I hope you will permit me to believe is a very real friendship."

Roosevelt didn't respond to the adulatory missive for almost five months. "When you get to know me better you will come to understand that though my letters are few and far between, my heart is in the right place," he finally replied. The Republicans, as FDR suspected, tried using the treaty against him in the campaign of 1936. Hoover mocked the pact, saying that the more abundant life Roosevelt promised Americans was apparently to be provided by Canadians. But Roosevelt was confident at the time of the King letter that the worst was over. "In a sense," he wrote him, "we both took our political lives in our own hands in a good cause and I am very happy to think the result has proven so successful."

With just one meeting King had been able to secure a major trade agreement that had eluded all predecessors, and establish a form of

rapprochement with a president that had never happened before. Roosevelt's personal connection with Canada was an advantage, as was the Harvard connection. The shared ideals of the two men were a factor. And the climate of war, and eventually the war itself, was something that almost compelled cooperation.

To the men who were around King through the Roosevelt years there were many reasons for the forging of such a splendid partnership. To Jack Pickersgill, who worked for King, "Roosevelt had so few people around he could talk to who didn't have an axe to grind," and King was one. "He liked to have King around to bounce his problems off him."⁷ It seemed to Liberal Paul Martin that Roosevelt took King under his wing because the prime minister was an exceptional veteran statesman and political leader whose advice was very valuable.⁸ To James Reston of the *New York Times*, it seemed a case of Roosevelt marvelling at the vast potential of the grand land to the north and wanting to be as close to it and its leader as possible.⁹

And, as Mackenzie King was to find out during his next meeting with the president, Roosevelt admired him because of his early background, his writing, and his education. While Roosevelt was off speaking to the governor-general, an associate who had talked to the president told King that Roosevelt was impressed because King was "about the only one left of the university men who had held on to politics as a career and kept his place with the people—a man of education who continued to command their confidence."

The meeting, in Quebec City in July 1936, marked the first time a president and prime minister met one another in Canada. Roosevelt wanted to see his good friend, Governor-General Lord Tweedsmuir, he wanted to further his relationship with King, he was in an election campaign and a Canada visit wouldn't hurt. As King put it, there was also the hope that a further display of friendship might have a "quieting effect upon the situation in Europe where international friendliness and goodwill seem to have lost their footing altogether."

As the president's train pulled in at 9:30 A.M. King observed a "fairly tired man and one who had been through a bit of brutal battering. Soon his face broke with a smile, and the dark or sombre expression was lost in the radiant one—he is very brown. It is quite amazing how he manages with his infirmity. His son, James, at his side, was a fine picture of filial devotion."

The reason for Roosevelt's success? "I think the President is reaching

the people more through his infirmity, his determination of will, and with family scenes—than in any other way.”

A weather-perfect visit, crowded with homilies about the undefended border and so on, it excited the prime minister because he was beginning to feel a harmony with Roosevelt. “How completely his views are in accord with my own,” he would soon record. “Anyone can see by reading my *Industry and Humanity*, the whole Roosevelt program is there.” He was smart enough to attempt to learn from the chief executive. When Roosevelt was preoccupied, he badgered his advisers about their man’s *modus operandi*: “It is clear to me his methods and point of view are not unlike my own re preparation of speeches and correspondence but he has an infinitely better organization and has an infinitely better capacity to delegate work and to take off time from work completely.”

In conversation Roosevelt recalled that several senators had recently asked him what he would do if Japan attacked British Columbia. The U.S. forces would move in to prevent Japan from getting a foothold, he replied. Someone then asked, well what would he do if Japan attacked Australia? “Australia is a hell of a long way off,” Roosevelt said.

In his public remarks, Roosevelt inaugurated the practice of the presidents saying some words in French, a practice that brought grief to many. Roosevelt carried it off splendidly, however, his staff supplying him with a long memo when he got home on the excellent press and public reaction to it.

Somehow, Prime Minister King was led to believe that these nice meetings with Roosevelt would have a healing effect on the acrimonious spirit of war-bound Europe. “It was all just as wonderfully beautiful as it possibly could be,” he noted in the diary. “One kept continually contrasting in one’s mind the condition of Europe—the fear and hate there and the confidence and goodwill here. I think the proceedings will do great good, are bound to have an effect in Europe.... I believe my speech will help in all this. It is a means of attacking the problem of international strife and unrest from the Christian side with Christian methods because of reason and understanding.”

Somehow too, King was led to believe that the president would likely be assassinated: “It is a truly horrible and contemptible campaign and he is a courageous man to face it all, doubly so with his physical condition.... It will be a miracle if he escapes assassination. If

he should be assassinated, it would mean instant civil war in the U.S.—Spain over again.”

The relationship between the two men became close and personal when they met in March 1937 at the White House. It was on this occasion that King read to Roosevelt in bed, shared with him private thoughts, and advised him on a number of issues. With Europe on the verge of conflict, Roosevelt was trying to organize a world peace conference in the United States, but was having his doubts about such a venture. King laid out a plan whereby the conference could be held in Geneva in conjunction with a League of Nations gathering. Roosevelt asked for more details and King came to his bedside the next morning with a written plan. Very excited about this development, King attributed it all to guidance from above: “This I am sure is divine planning of things working together for good by unseen spiritual forces.” His mission, he believed, was “a holy one, that God’s spirit was guiding—that Christ’s purpose was being fulfilled, that I was acting as an agent to help fulfill his Holy will.” Roosevelt was under one of the most stinging attacks of his career because of his ill-advised attempt to change the rules governing Supreme Court appointments so that he could get a court more amenable to his New Deal legislation. He was lying down, reading the bad reviews in the morning papers. The prime minister told him that his policies were Christian, and “the world would find Christianity was a virile thing.” He complimented Roosevelt on his moves toward world peace. The president told King he had helped take his mind off other things and the prime minister “left with the President urging me to be careful about my health, I doing the same to him, each with a wave of the hand to the other—like brothers.”

One of the subjects discussed during the visit was the readiness of Canada to defend itself. It was a short discussion. King suggested that many of his countrymen seemed to think that the Monroe Doctrine was sufficient protection for Canada and that Ottawa therefore didn’t have to worry about defence preparations. He added that no self-respecting government could countenance such a view. The president quickly got down to the basics of the situation. His demands were not great. “What we would like would be for Canada to have a few patrol boats on the Pacific Coast.”¹⁰ Don’t worry about the Atlantic, he said, leading King to assume that Washington and Britain could protect him there.

Earlier in the evening when other guests were present “the President

said in a joking way that he and I were going to toss a coin to see whether I should give him the maritime provinces, or whether he should give Canada Maine and Vermont; he was quite evidently joking at the part of America which had gone against him.”

The president, sensing that in King he did not have a drinking mate, explained to him that the reason he drank was because of his polio. His feet often became cold and in order to keep the blood circulating down there, doctors had recommended pre-dinner cocktails. Then he told King his view of the King Edward-Wallis Simpson affair. He hoped Mrs. Simpson would make a good wife, but knew her type. “In a few years, she would become pretty plain looking and be a different person.” The conversation was another during which King was not aware of Roosevelt’s hearing disability. The president, as usual, had him sit on the same sofa by his right side. But King soon moved, thinking he was being considerate. Some of the ideas exchanged were ones which would have made the press shudder. With respect to the advent of radio, the prime minister said that governments could not afford to turn over to private organizations the control of what was being said over the air. Roosevelt agreed entirely.

Already, the personal nature of the diplomacy between the two was beginning to aggravate other politicians and the press. King was so close-mouthed after his summits that White House reporters, in their frustration, concocted a rhyme: “William Lyon Mackenzie King— Never tells us a goddam thing.” They sang it often, and FDR passed the news of it along to the prime minister. The two of them wanted to get together again in 1937, but King wrote to Roosevelt suggesting that perhaps too many suspicions were being generated: “I expect to be told, as soon as the debates of the session begin, that all kinds of deals with respect to trade between Great Britain and the United States, the St. Lawrence Waterways and the export of power and much else have been made between the two of us, and that already in some mysterious way we have tied the hands of the members of Congress in the United States and the members of Parliament in Canada.” But “no one except yourself,” King added, “knows better than I do how much in the interests of both countries it is that you and I should have frequent opportunities to talk together.”

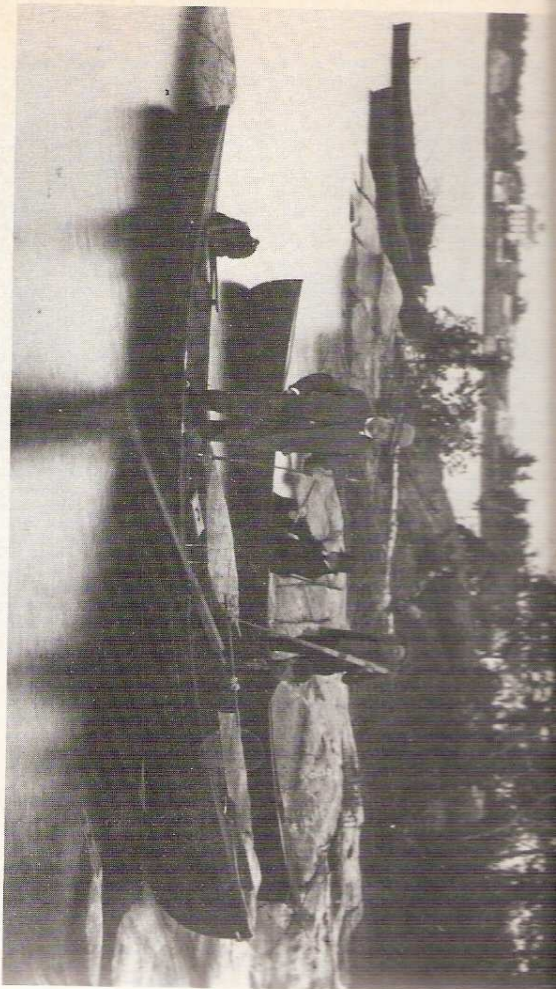
Roosevelt was of the same mind. “It was father’s hope,” wrote son Elliott, “that the day would come when he and Mackenzie could ‘drop in and visit’ with each other as casually as members of the same family.”



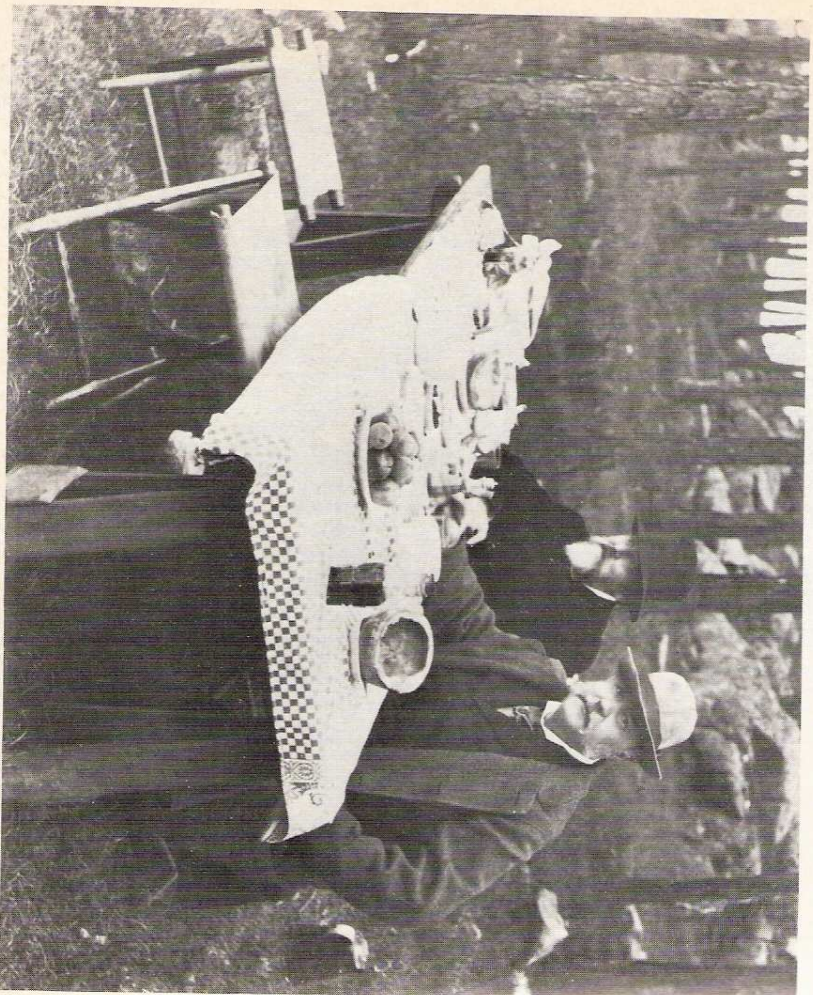
Ulysses S. Grant. (Public Archives of Canada.)



The British High Commissioners, 1871. Standing, left to right: Lord Tenterden, Sir John A. Macdonald, Montague Bernard. Seated, left to right: Sir Stafford Northcote, Earl de Grey & Ripon, Sir Edward Thornton. (Public Archives of Canada.)



Sir Wilfrid Laurier at Red Deer, Alberta, 1910. (Capital Press Service.)

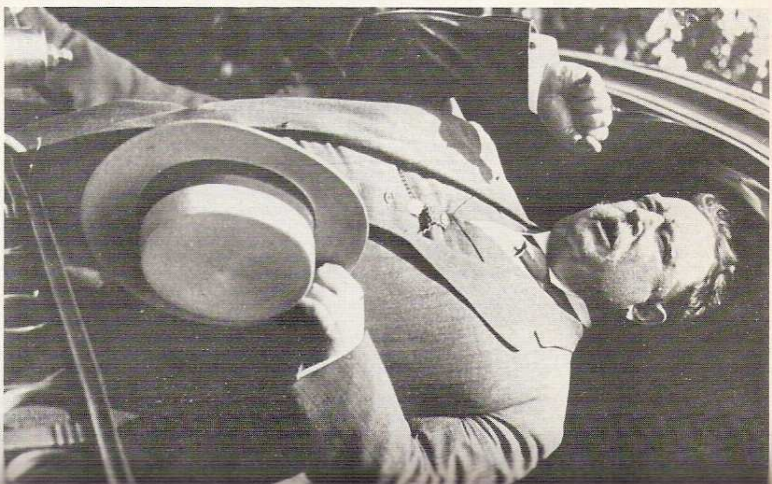


President Chester A. Arthur during his visit to the Thousand Islands, 1882. (Public Archives of Canada.)

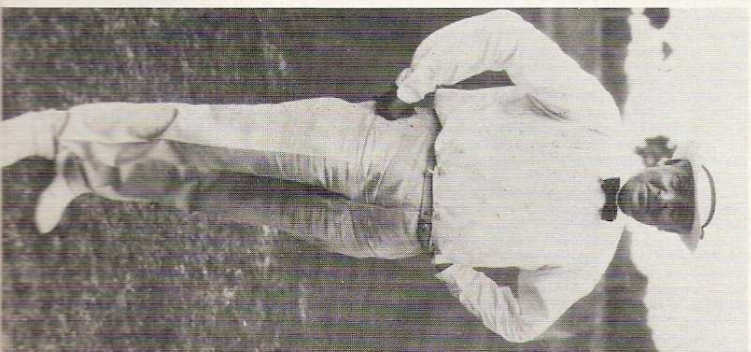


Teddy Roosevelt, c. 1905.

William Taft, 1908. (*The Globe and Mail*.)



Warren Harding on his way to Vancouver, B.C., 1923. (*United Press International*.)



Harding on the golf links in Vancouver where he fell ill. This was the first official visit of a president to Canada. (*United Press International*.)



Richard Bennett (left) meeting Franklin D. Roosevelt (centre) at the White House, 1934. (*Public Archives of Canada*.)



Franklin Roosevelt at Queen's University, August 1938. (*The Globe and Mail*.)



FDR and Mackenzie King at Ogdensburg, New York, 1940. (*The Globe and Mail*.)



Harry Truman and Mackenzie King during the president's visit to Ottawa, June 1947.
(*The Globe and Mail*.)



Truman with King and Mounties at a press conference in the Laurentians, 1947.
(*The Globe and Mail*.)



Truman shares a joke with (left to right) Ray Atherton, U.S. ambassador to Canada, Mackenzie King, and (right) Staff Sergeant C. W. Graham, during a visit to the Seignory Club at Montebello, Quebec, June 1947. (Public Archives of Canada.)



Truman greeting Louis St. Laurent in Washington, 1949. (Wide World Photos.)



St. Laurent and Dwight D. Eisenhower at the Augusta National Golf Club in Georgia, 1956. (Wide World Photos.)



John Diefenbaker with Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in Ottawa, 1958. (Wide World Photos.)



John F. Kennedy arriving in Ottawa, 1961. (Wide World Photos.)



Kennedy addressing a joint session of Parliament in Ottawa, May 17, 1961. (Wide World Photos.)



Kennedy during the tree planting where he wrenched his back. 1961. (Canadian Press.)



Reception at the U.S. embassy at the close of Kennedy's 1961 visit. From left: Kennedy, Governor-General George Vanier, Jacqueline Kennedy, Mrs. Vanier, John Diefenbaker, and Olive Dieffenbaker. (Wide World Photos.)



Lester Pearson and John Kennedy at Hyannis Port, 1963.
(Wide World Photos.)

Pearson with Lyndon Johnson at the president's ranch in Texas, 1965. With them are Lady Bird Johnson and Maryon Pearson.
(Wide World Photos.)



Pearson and Johnson at the Camp David meeting where Johnson rebuked the prime minister for his speech on Vietnam, 1965.
(Wide World Photos.)

Pearson and Johnson at a press conference in Ottawa following Johnson's visit to Esqvo '67.
(Canadian Press)





Reagan addressing Parliament in Ottawa, March 12, 1981.
(United Press Canada.)

A casual drop-in was made by Roosevelt at Queen's University in August of 1938 and a casual remark was made. At least he considered it a casual remark. "I give to you the assurance," he told a large crowd in the football stadium, "that the people of the United States will not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil is threatened by any other empire."

The statement, to his great surprise, became a landmark one in Canada-U.S. relations as it was considered the first defence commitment of the United States to its neighbour. "What I said at Queen's was so obvious," FDR wrote Tweedsmuir, "that I cannot quite understand why some American President did not say it half a century ago." A similar commitment, though not heralded by the press as such, had been given by Secretary of State Knox twenty-seven years earlier. A few days later, King reciprocated Roosevelt the best he could by pledging that hostile powers would not be allowed to base operations against the United States from Canada. In his diary he made reference to the Roosevelt commitment but gave equal prominence to the fact that Roosevelt alluded to "our both being from Harvard, using, in this connection, the expression 'Mackenzie King and myself.'"

The next time they met, King, always sensitive to the political value of the association, announced that it was no exaggeration to say that "the relations between the United States and Canada have never been happier than in the three years that have elapsed since November, 1935." The occasion was the reaffirmation and the extension of the 1935 trade agreement. The health of the president, of great concern to King since he met him, jolted the prime minister. Roosevelt had lost many, many pounds, his eyes were terribly weary, and King was frank with him in saying how poorly he looked and how he wished he would get some rest. After a long series of meetings, Roosevelt told King he had arranged for them to dine alone. This was something the presidents and prime ministers rarely did. According to King, Roosevelt told him that "he liked this so much better, and could relax with me."

A rumour spread at this time that the bachelor prime minister had a greater interest in the White House than his relations with the president. He was quite taken, reports said, with FDR's social secretary, Marguerite LeHand, or Missy as she was called. A tall, dignified, reasonably attractive woman, Missy was a personal favourite of the president's and believed to be romantically involved with him. In his

diary account from the visit of November 1938, King refers to Missy throwing him a kiss. "She is a very fine woman," he wrote, "I can see what a great help she must be to the whole family."

At the White House, though Eleanor could never understand what her husband saw in him, the prime minister was gaining the status of a close relative. At the State Department, where Cordell Hull was a deep admirer of King's, the same was true. "If I had belonged to the department myself, I could not have met with more in the way of recognition along the way," said King. "Darkey messengers and porters, as well as members of the staff, all seemed to know me."

Hull, a Tennessean, an architect of Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy, was so kind and benevolent that when listening to him King got the feeling that "he was just thinking out loud. Two or three times however, to my surprise, he used the expression 'Christ Almighty.'"

FDR had confided to the prime minister that he did not intend on seeking re-election in 1940, and that although he was hesitant because of Hull's age (then sixty-nine), he wanted him to be the next president. But Roosevelt did not personally broach the subject to Hull. He chose as his intermediary in important internal American politics none other than the prime minister of Canada.

On April 29, 1940, King told Hull that it was not really his business but that "for the sake of the world," he should run and become the next president. He said that Mr. Roosevelt was looking to him to succeed. Telling the secretary of his Canadian electoral successes, King even offered advice on how he should run his campaign. Use radio instead of travelling, he offered, and don't hesitate to use a picture of yourself with a dog. King felt posters of him and his mutt, Pat, had been a substantial political plus. He said that he thought "the people at this time would appreciate a campaign carried on in that way in the U.S." Hull doubted his capabilities in domestic affairs and was reluctant considering his age but, as FDR chose to run again, he never got a chance anyway.

He was delighted to hear from King that he was the president's choice. Then, and in the years to come, he invited the prime minister to his apartment for informal lunches and dinners. His analysis of King? "I found him a very serious-minded person, thoroughly agreeable in his relations with others, philosophical, unpretentious and sanely liberal. He possessed great vision and constructive ability. Not an impassioned orator, he was nevertheless a fluent, forceful and

captivating speaker. I never knew a more unselfish patriot or a man who loved humanity more."

The advantage of close ties with Washington for the Canadian head of state was evidenced in the summer of 1939 when King George VI was planning a historic visit with Roosevelt in the United States. The prime minister, who would be seeing the king in Canada anyway, really had no business being on the U.S. leg of his tour but there was an opening for a minister-in-attendance. A Canadian election was only months away, and coupled with his great yearning to be part of historic occasions, King could use the wonderful shower of publicity for political purposes. He knew that the British weren't really considering him for the role, but realized that President Roosevelt might have some input. "I understand," he wrote in a slyly worded letter to FDR, "that before a final decision is reached by his Majesty as to who, if anyone at all, is to accompany him as Minister or Ministers in attendance, it is proposed to ascertain your own wishes and to be guided by them.

"In these circumstances, it would, of course, not do for me to express any opinion as to what may or may not be best from the point of view of the United States." But, "I have thought I should let you know at once that I shall be acting as Minister in attendance upon the King throughout the period of his visit to Canada, and that nothing would give me more pleasure than to accompany his Majesty in the same capacity in the course of his visit to the United States."

Roosevelt, against the stated wishes of London, lobbied strongly for King and won him the position. King George went so far as to mention during the visit that initially he had someone else in mind. "Mackenzie and I," Roosevelt told him, "know each other so well that I was most anxious he should come." For this trip, the president even helped the prime minister with his appearance. King was a dour dresser and with discretion, Roosevelt wrote: "If it is terrifically hot can't you discard that very good looking gray morning suit and light gray hat and design for yourself a white naval uniform, with gold maple leaves to denote Prime Minister rank?" Throughout the visit Roosevelt, sensitive to the prime minister's needs, sensitive to the fact he would continue to need his support, made a point of seeing to it that the Canadian leader was right next to himself and King George for all the well-photographed ceremonies.

Despite King George's initial coolness to his participation, Mac-

kenzie King soon ingratiated himself, and it wasn't long before the two of them and Roosevelt were sharing gossip about such figures as Winston Churchill. Roosevelt felt Churchill was one of the only leaders who realized the magnitude of the problems ahead, but unfortunately "Churchill was tight most of the time." He said that when Sumner Welles, his undersecretary of state, visited him, Churchill drank whiskey throughout, then made a speech of an hour's length, at the end of which "he had become sober." King George said he wouldn't wish to appoint Churchill to any high office unless it was absolutely necessary in time of war. "I confess I am glad to hear him say that," the prime minister recorded, "because I think Churchill is one of the most dangerous men I have ever known." He described his behaviour with Welles as shameful: "It is that arrogance and the assumed superiority that some Englishmen have that have made so many nations their enemies today."

Although the king's visit marked yet another successful outing for the prime minister with the president, King still wasn't confident enough to address Roosevelt by his first name. He opened a letter following the occasion with his usual formality: "My Dear Mr. President." In his first sentence he said: "I almost wrote My Dear Franklin, for so indeed I feel, but my Scotch reserve gets the better of me." With typical excess, the prime minister went on to say, in describing the visit, that "nothing fraught with so great significance or good has happened since the great schism of the Anglo-Saxon race." The only regrets were the consistency with which the "darkey waiters" kept dropping trays of expensive china and, as he pointed out in the letter, his failure to join the president and the king for a swim. When FDR called for him to join in, King declined because he felt there would be a big party of swimmers. He went off for a ride with Miss LeHand and another gentleman. When later he heard that the swim was an exclusive affair, he was upset for weeks. "I am afraid I missed one of the great events of my life."

His relationship with Roosevelt was not distinguished by harmony alone. There were moments when the quality of the bond would be put to tough testing, the worst clashes coming in the early stages of the war. Roosevelt was clearly bothered by Canada's inadequate defence, saying it presented a danger to the United States. King said he was doing his best but admitted the best wasn't much. The slow nature of British war preparations bothered Roosevelt more however. "Now I will ask you something," he said to King. "You have Canada. You get

Australia and New Zealand and all of you put a burr on the tail of the British. They are so slow about everything." King agreed. "Well, Mackenzie," said Roosevelt, "if there is more trouble you will not mind if I ring you up." In an unnecessary gesture of politeness he turned to Loring Christie, the Canadian ambassador in Washington: "You will not mind if I go over your head and talk straight across the phone to Mr. King."¹¹ But the next request of the president to the prime minister did not come directly. In May, the Germans were toppling France. England could be next and Roosevelt and Hull were doubtful she could defend herself. The president told H. L. Keenleyside, a Canadian External Affairs emissary, that he believed Hitler might make an offer of settlement based on Britain relinquishing her colonial empire and sea fleet in exchange for her salvation. Such would make Germany superior in military power to the United States. He gave Keenleyside instructions to relay to the prime minister: Line up the Dominions to bring concerted pressure on England to reject any soft peace and, before making any settlement, disperse her fleet to the United States and the colonies so it would remain out of German hands. Not only was King to orchestrate Dominion pressure on London but also to personally notify Churchill of Roosevelt's wishes.

King was shocked. He had always promoted and enjoyed playing the role of intermediary between the two big powers, but this was too burdensome. Although he had often been accused of being anti-British, and although he had even been referred to as "the American" in the quiet corridors of diplomacy, he was thinking now that "the U.S. was seeking to save itself at the expense of Great Britain," and he didn't like it. "I instinctively revolted against such a thought," he wrote in his diary. "My reaction was that I would rather die than to daunt to save ourselves or any part of this continent at the expense of Britain."

He sent Keenleyside back to Washington to make sure the instructions were perfectly clear, to make sure the president meant what he had said. Yes, Keenleyside reported back, the message was to be delivered to Churchill. In anguish, the prime minister decided to go ahead with the assignment. He set about wording a letter that would "appear to be from myself rather than from him [Roosevelt], while at the same time taking care to see that it was wholly his point of view that I was putting over and not my own."

The key paragraph of his message read: "The United States cannot,

it is considered, give immediate belligerent aid. If however Britain and France could hold out for some months, aid could probably then be given. If further resistance by the fleet in British waters became impossible before such aid could be given, the President believes that, having ultimate victory for the allies and the final defeat of the enemy in view, it would be disastrous to surrender the fleet on any terms, that it should be sent to South Africa, Australia, the Caribbean and Canada...."

Churchill was affronted by the message. He shot back a telegram: "We must be careful not to let Americans view too complacently prospect of a British collapse, out of which they would get the British fleet and the guardianship of the British empire minus Great Britain.... Although President is our best friend, no practical help has [reached us] from the United States as yet." Then he asked King to do some lobbying the other way: "Any pressure you can apply in this direction would be invaluable."

The prime minister, who instructed Keenleyside to provide the news of the rebuke to Roosevelt, was becoming exasperated. His finance minister, J. L. Ralston, found him working in his office at 2:00 A.M. one morning on another telegram. He told Ralston that he was played out, finished, couldn't carry the load and was on the point of quitting: "Chief, you've got to go through," Ralston told him. "The despatch you are working on may mean victory."

King satisfied himself that he was too indispensable to the world at the time to consider stepping aside. The president and Mr. Hull were his "intimate, personal friends," he told his Liberal party caucus. "If they learned tomorrow that this government had gone and I had ceased to be its leader, I do not know just what effect that would have on all relations of confidence not only between Canada and the United States but between the States and Britain."

The danger to Britain meant danger to Canada and King was compelled to brood upon the vulnerability of his country's negligible defences. There was Roosevelt's informal Kingston pledge and other casual assurances from the president that Washington would offer protection, but there was no North American alliance as such, and King wanted one, or something close to one. The way it came about was classic King-Roosevelt.

In June of 1940, the prime minister had requested some low-level talks. Roosevelt, concerned about preparations in the North Atlantic,

told Canadian ambassador Christie on August 15 that he was thinking of sending three officials to Ottawa for discussions. But there was no urgency in his conversation and little indication that any breakthrough was imminent.

At the time of the Christie conversation, the State Department received a memo from its distinguished minister in Ottawa, J. Pierrepont Moffat. Canadian public opinion, he wrote, had gathered solidly behind the need for a joint defence understanding with the United States. "As a matter of practical politics the Prime Minister may ultimately be forced to recognize the existence of this popular demand.... The old fear that cooperation with the United States would tend to weaken Canada's ties with Britain has almost entirely disappeared."

The day after receiving the memo, and the day after the talk with Christie, Roosevelt phoned King. He said he was on his way to Ogdensburg, New York to inspect American forces and would like King to meet him there: "We can talk over defense matters between Canada and the U.S. together. I would like you to stay the night with me in the car [railway] and on Sunday I am going to a Field Day service at 11. We could attend it together."¹²

King met with his Defence Department officials, had a hair cut at the Chateau Laurier, and arrived in Ogdensburg at the appointed hour. Initially the president was preoccupied studying the first major campaign speech of Republican opponent Wendell Wilkie. But he then entered into a long discussion with King and War Secretary Stinson on continental defence. The talks continued the next morning whereupon the president took a sheet of paper and a pencil from a basket. He began drafting the first defence pact between Canada and the United States, an agreement which marked the first accord between the United States and a belligerent in the war, an agreement signalling a changed destiny for Canada—from the cloak of the Empire to the cloak of the continent. As custom with this president and this prime minister would have it, the creation of the Permanent Joint Board on Defense was an entirely personal venture. Neither the Canadian cabinet, the U.S. cabinet, the Congress, nor Winston Churchill were consulted about it.

When Roosevelt finished drafting the statement in the railway car he read it aloud to King. Roosevelt used the word "commission," King said "board" would be better. He questioned the president on

the use of the word "permanent." Roosevelt explained that it was highly significant because the board was not just to be a response to wartime emergency, but a lasting institution.

Feeling that a press conference was unnecessary, the president called in an aide to get his script typed, had it mimeographed, and in ten minutes copies were handed to reporters. Stimson said it was a good day's work. King thanked both men with typical extravagance and remarked inaccurately on how Churchill would be so impressed.

The British leader soon wired: "I am deeply interested in the arrangements you are making for Canada and America's mutual defence. Here again there may be two opinions on some of the points mentioned. Supposing Mr. Hitler cannot invade us and his Air Force begins to blench under the strain, all these transactions will be judged in a mood different to that prevailing while the issue still hangs in the balance."

But in Canada where it mattered most for King, the agreement was widely praised. He commented in his diary at the time on what made him and Roosevelt tick: "A certain boyish interest in simple things... a thorough dislike of undue formality," and a shared view that "the really important things of life are very simple and that all that is needed is good will and sincere intent to effect any great end."

As King's rapport with the president developed, it did not bring him greater security. The sycophantic nature of his approach to Roosevelt only increased. After almost every meeting there would be a King letter to the effect that it was one of the great experiences of his life. After the signing of the Ogdensburg Agreement he may have been a little out of form. In his letter to the president, he could do no better than call it "one of the most far reaching agreements ever reached on this or any other continent." There were no references to the great Anglo-Saxon schism.

But if the approach aggravated Roosevelt, he didn't show it. The enjoyment he derived from being with King and talking to him was evidenced by his desire to have the prime minister join him on his holidays. Early in 1941, Archibald MacLeish, the librarian of Congress, was leaving the American minister's residence in Ottawa when King turned, came toward him, and "with a sudden and very real warmth," asked MacLeish to greet the president for him. "Give him my love," said King. MacLeish then wrote the president. "I have never heard words spoken with more sincerity."

As soon as he got the MacLeish letter, Roosevelt wrote the prime minister: "One of our mutual friends who saw you recently told me that he thought you looked a wee bit tired and that it would do you good to run down to the United States for a little while to 'get your gas tank refilled.'"

"... I still hope to go to Warm Springs for a week or ten days starting the end of March. It would be grand if you could come down there again."

King wanted to see Roosevelt, not only for rest, but to ask for another favour. Canada was facing a balance-of-payments crisis. Usually Ottawa had a trade deficit with the United States, but a balancing surplus with Britain. With Britain at war however, London was unable to meet its dollar payments for Canadian imports, leaving the Ottawa treasury dangerously depleted. Ottawa mandarins had failed for months to negotiate more favourable terms with the Americans to make up the deficit and now Mackenzie King was about to do it himself. As soon as he left for the president's home at Hyde Park, New York, he knew God was on his side because when he awakened he noticed the two hands of the clock were on top of one another. King got very excited whenever this happened. This time, he felt it was a sign there was "a guiding hand in my mission."

FDR at this time was extremely well disposed toward the Dominion. In his 1940 election victory the French-Canadians on the eastern seaboard, for the first time, went solidly for him. He was planning a trip to Ottawa and agreed with the prime minister that he would probably receive a rousing welcome. On meeting, the two men congratulated each other on the wonderful jobs they'd done in respect to relations on the continent. King was delighted because the president didn't have his economic experts with him, meaning that it would be easier for the prime minister to sell the deal. Roosevelt, who invited King into his "cubby hole" study for a shirt-sleeved talk, didn't know much about international economics. King explained the problem and posed the solution—a Canada-U.S. defence production sharing arrangement whereby the United States would purchase more war supplies and munitions from Canada. Washington in turn would simply supply them to the British under the lend-lease formula. This way, Canada's exchange problem could be solved.

Roosevelt thought it was "a swell idea." He telephoned his treasury secretary and gave him a synopsis. He took a copy of a draft of a possible agreement that King had been cocky enough to prepare in

advance and told his press secretary he could strike out the word "draft" and use it for the real thing. King asked if they should not have an official signing. "No, you don't need to trouble about that," said the president. "But let me write on one." In pencil, he scribbled on the original: "Done by Mackenzie and F.D.R. on a grand Sunday in April."

The president insisted that the prime minister be the one to give out the copies of the agreement to the press. King did so happily, climbed into his train car and went to bed at once. But he got up a few minutes later to see what he thought was the president sitting in his train car as it rolled by. In his pyjamas and dressing gown, King dropped to his knees to thank God for the marvellous day. But the excitement wasn't over yet. When he looked up at the clock, "the hands were absolutely across each other at about six minutes to 11. It was almost as though some one were speaking to me."

In Washington, some technical officials were dubious about what Roosevelt had signed. When King telephoned him one day he heard the president shouting instructions: "This is what I want done! Don't tell me why it can't be done. Just do it!"

The Hyde Park Agreement, as it was called, was one of King's greatest successes. It removed the currency crisis, aided Canada's economy, helped in the country's war effort, created a closer bilateral economic climate, and it gave King more political bonus points because the deal was clearly seen to be in Canada's favour.

But it was not long after the master stroke that the always insecure prime minister suffered his most tormenting episode in connection with FDR. It had been his habit to have the occasional drink with the president, but in 1941, he felt he owed it to his dog, Pat, to swear off the stuff. During a follow-up visit to Hyde Park he had to turn down the offer of a drink from the great president and for Mackenzie King it was "one of the greatest struggles of my life... I do not recall a time when I experienced more in the way of self-torture."

He described what happened: "I had had in mind for months past that when I came to pay this visit to the President that he would be expecting me to have a drink with him... I had wrestled with myself when little Pat passed away and made the vow I did then to give up taking anything to drink. I kept it firmly in England with Churchill.

"... Just before I left to dress for dinner the president said to Princess Juliana and myself, we will have a cocktail in my room before

dinner—then to Princess Juliana—you know Mackenzie King only takes a drink when he comes to see me."

King said at once, "You will have to let me off. I then explained that before going to England I had sworn off, knowing how much sherry and wine etc. was consumed there and that Churchill would want me to drink with him as he did."

Before dinner, cocktails were made and everyone stood around drinking them except King. Later, he wrote of the occasion: "I would have given anything for just one glass of wine or sherry as a cocktail but I held out. I said to the President that I felt I was spoiling the party and that I should not perhaps have made the resolution I did and should make an exception. But the President said quite firmly, putting up his hand—'You must not.' It was as if some force or voice was compelling him to speak."

At dinner everyone continued drinking and King only had water, although he would have preferred ginger ale. He then found it very hard to talk and remember names, and felt that instead of easing the president's burden he was adding to it. After dinner he retired to his bedroom and wrestled away the night:

"I was very restless, tearing my soul out wondering if I had made a great mistake in binding myself the way I had, wondering if I had not made relations between the President and myself more difficult for the future, in other words, really injured relations instead of helping them between our countries.... At one time I had a queer sensation as if the house had been bombed. I felt the house was being attacked and I felt real fear, but decided to stay; curiously enough the bomb seemed to me as if something had exploded in my own stomach. This was the way the night lasted till dawn.

"... I thought then I should look at the clock for evidence to see if someone was watching over me and if I was right.... To my delight and comfort the hands of the clock were together."

The anguish didn't seem to register with President Roosevelt. In a letter he told King the visit had been a joy and spoke again of how the continent was blessed with fortune.

Meanwhile, the prime minister was having more visions. In one dream, set near Queen's Park in Toronto, he was walking with the crippled Roosevelt who was using King as a support. The president was getting tired, the city was getting crowded, and King couldn't get a taxi. He struck the poor president on top of a newsbox, or something

like one, and left him there, sitting on it. King proceeded into the hotel to find a taxi but could only find a bunch of selfish, rich people. They were indifferent. They laughed at him and at what he told them.

The moral? Roosevelt was now "hard pressed, in a tight corner.... He had lost the sense of freedom which he had when we were together prior to the entry of the U.S. into the war."

U.S. officials complained in the early 1940s that, as Pierrepont Moffat put it, "Things move very slowly in Mr. King's mind."¹³ Moffat was lamenting Ottawa's indecision in respect to playing a more active role helping the democratic forces in Latin America. His message about King's lassitude was forwarded to Roosevelt who, in an interestingly worded missive, tried to get the prime minister moving.

"As you know," he wrote King, "I have 'hunches'—not always good but sometimes accurate.

"This is for your information only. My present 'hunch' is that it would help if Canada could take a great part in the struggle between the forces of totalitarianism and the forces of democracy being waged in Latin America. They use somewhat different weapons down there—but it is a real fight.

"Canada can help."

Among Roosevelt's other hunches was one asserting that the territory known as Newfoundland was not fit for occupation. In a meeting with King and Churchill, the British prime minister suggested that with a military base there, the Americans might be considering taking the island over. Roosevelt said there were some things he might like to acquire but Newfoundland was not one of them. It was "suitable for raising sheep," he said.¹⁴

The president continued with favours for King. When Canadian troops landed with the Americans and the British on Sicily to begin a new campaign, the British War Office prepared to announce that only British units had arrived with General Eisenhower's Americans. His political fortunes depressed at the time, King was furious. His solution was to telephone Roosevelt and tell him the Canadian people were not going to tolerate being overlooked again. Roosevelt brought out his bat once more and sent an order overseas stipulating that the Canadians be included in the announcement.

In December 1942, King wanted a congratulatory letter from the president on the third anniversary of the British Commonwealth Air

Training Plan, a project in which Canada had played a large role. On this occasion a peculiar short cut was taken. Neither Roosevelt nor members of his staff knew much about the program or what to say in such a message. Finally, a White House assistant, without informing the State Department, approached the Canadian embassy for help. His idea?—Why don't you people write your own letter of congratulations and we'll have the president sign it? The embassy official approached was Lester Pearson. He was somewhat shocked by the absence of diplomatic propriety but agreed to it. On December 16, a beautiful, laudatory letter, signed by the president but written by a future Canadian prime minister was sent to the current prime minister.

Pearson was at his descriptive heights: "May this great Air Training Plan, which... has made Canada the aerodrome of democracy go from strength to strength. May it continue to send into the skies thousands of eager and courageous young fliers until the enemy is swept from the air and lies crushed on earth beneath the ruins of his own temple of tyranny." The unknowing King was deeply thrilled.

Although Roosevelt's interest in Canadian fliers were not engrossing, he and staff members had considerable concern for the Quebec problem and Canadian unity. Moffat was struck by the attitude of English Canadians toward the French. "They do not so much hate the French Canadians as despise them," he wrote the president in August 1942. The English are "increasingly talking of them as though they weren't even Canadians, merely a minority living in Canada."

The president took time off from his war deliberations to compose a lengthy letter to King on the French problem. His advice was to get moving on the assimilation process: "When I was a boy in the nineties I used to see a good many French Canadians who had rather recently come into the New Bedford area near the old Delano place at Fair Haven. They seemed very much out of place in what was still an old New England community. They aggregated themselves in the mill towns and had little to do with their neighbors. I can remember that the old generation shook their heads and used to say, 'this is a new element which will never be assimilated. We are assimilating the Irish but these Quebec people won't even speak English. Their bodies are here but their hearts and minds are in Quebec.'"

Today, he said, they have been absorbed. "They no longer vote as their churches and societies tell them to. They are inter-marrying

with the original Anglo-Saxon stock: they are good peaceful citizens and most of them are speaking English in their homes....

"All of this leads me to wonder whether by some sort of planning, Canada and the United States, working towards the same ends, cannot do some planning—perhaps unwritten planning which need not even be a public policy—by which we can hasten the objective of assimilating the New England French Canadians and Canada's French-Canadians into the whole of our respective bodies politic. There are of course many methods of doing this which depend on local circumstances." Concluding, he said that "there would seem to be no good reason for great differentials between the French Canadian population elements and the rest of the racial stocks."

In the early 1940s when the defence of the continent was of primary importance to Americans, Canada received more attention than normal from Washington. This would change after the war when American responsibilities became global as well as continental, but for the time being the care and consideration were badly needed balm for King's fragile confidence. He was still fretful of calling Roosevelt by his first name. He confessed once to Roosevelt that he was afraid the president found him dumb. He would look up at the clock during conversations hoping that the hands would be forming the straight line.

In May of 1943, King got the first in a series of ego-boosters when he took part in a meeting at the White House with Roosevelt and Churchill. Initially he hadn't been invited, but with some foxy footwork was successful. Before the meeting King knew that Churchill wouldn't have time for a stopover in Canada but his strategy was to invite the British leader anyway, have the request turned down, and thereby gain leverage for having to join the meeting in Washington. Pearson, who wrote the telegram to Churchill, recalled: "It was evident that I was also delicately to convey to Mr. Churchill the impression that, if time made it impossible for him to come to Ottawa, Mr. King was prepared to accept an invitation to Washington. I got the point at once since I knew how Mr. King liked to convert these Big Two meetings into Big Three or even Big Two and a Half ones. Who could blame him?"

Roosevelt and Churchill praised King in their sessions, talking of him as the ideal man to moderate a post-war conference on reconstruction of the world. "Is it not a fact," asked Churchill, "that we three men who are at this table, now, have had more experience in

government than any other men in the world today?" The status of the Canadian legation in Washington was being changed to that of a full-fledged embassy with an ambassador instead of a minister. FDR referred to the need for the prime minister to get consent from the king. Churchill rejected such an obligation, saying "Canada has complete control of her own affairs."

Roosevelt confided in the prime minister many of his deliberations with Churchill, among them the story of how the United Nations got its name. After a fruitless session with Churchill in search of a phrase to describe the countries fighting for freedom, Roosevelt went to bed one night and couldn't sleep. He wanted the word "united" in the phrase but couldn't come up with an appropriate companion word. Suddenly "nations" came to him and he knew immediately it was right. Excited, he couldn't wait until breakfast to tell Churchill and had his aide wheel him to the British leader's door at daybreak. He knocked and heard Churchill shout: "I'm in the tub." Roosevelt entered and the cherubic Churchill popped from the bath, "not a stripe on him." The president pointed a finger and declared, "Winston, I have it—The United Nations." Churchill agreed immediately that it was right. King told Roosevelt that the name had been "properly baptized."

In the planning for the first Quebec conference—the Roosevelt-Churchill parley which laid plans for the invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe—the question naturally arose as to the status of host Mackenzie King. Since Canada's war contribution was substantial and since the meeting was in Canada, it was argued, particularly by the British, that King should have full status at plenary sessions. Here, Roosevelt went against him, successfully reasoning that if Ottawa was let in many other countries would have to be let in. But King wasn't bothered. As long as the big two were coming and he was host, it would be "quite sufficient to make clear that all three are in conference together and will not only satisfy but will please the Canadian feeling and really be very helpful to me personally."

The conference went smoothly. King got in all the important pictures, the role of the Canadian forces was lauded by Roosevelt after Churchill had forgotten, the president was crazy about Quebec trout, and the "Big Two" finished the work they wanted on war plans. One of the only blights on the week, in King's view, was a showing of a film of the Group of Seven artists, featuring mainly the work of A. Y. Jackson. "I really felt ashamed of the exhibition being announced as

Canadian art," King wrote. The paintings, he said, destroyed and distorted many natural and beautiful Canadian scenes. The prime minister was also needled about his tea-drinking ways. As Roosevelt and Churchill enjoyed their scotches, Churchill told King he should forget about his silly resolution. But the problems were small stuff compared to the glories of a conference which, the prime minister said in a final statement, "helped to put our country on the map of the world."

Just as important for him were the next few days. Roosevelt proceeded from Quebec to Ottawa to become the first president to visit Canada's capital. It was seventy-six years since Canadian Confederation, and 154 years since George Washington's first presidency. Spectacular sunshine and a loving crowd of thirty thousand greeted the president on Parliament Hill. The House was out of session but the members had been called back to Ottawa so that Roosevelt could speak to them. He knew many of them because the U.S. embassy was in the habit of providing him with capsule summaries. In the cabinet, "Chubby" Power was "unfortunately a periodic drinker," Ralston was "too immersed in detail," and despite his sound common sense, Crerar was "definitely a 'has been.'" Among the Conservatives, R. B. Hanson was "none too friendly to the United States" and "completely uninspired."

For the size of the occasion, Roosevelt's speech was not a proper fit. His prose managed to sidestep Canadian and for the most part Canada-U.S. affairs, and focussed almost totally on the war and the evil Nazis: "Sometimes I wish that that great master of intuition, the Nazi leader, could have been present in spirit at the Quebec Conference—I am thoroughly glad he was not there in person. If he and his generals had known our plans they would have realized that discretion is still the better part of valor and that surrender would pay them better now than later.... We spend our energies and our resources and the very lives of our sons and daughters because a band of gangsters in the community of nations declines to recognize the fundamentals of decent, human conduct."

The way Nazis deal with their neighbour is "first to delude him with lies, then to attack him treacherously, then beat him down and step on him, and then either kill him or enslave him."

It was a speech that could just as well have been given in Kansas as Canada, but for King there was a reference which pleased him

greatly. Roosevelt alluded to him as "my old friend" and added: "Your course and mine have run so closely and affectionately during these many long years that this meeting adds another link to the chain." The visit was not without its disappointments for the prime minister however. Beside the fact that the president's car broke down during a motorcade, King found, while showing Roosevelt through his Laurier House residence, that his favourite table had a cloth on it: "I took a look at the dining-room table while the president was having a wash. My heart fell into my boots when I saw the table had been set with a white cloth instead of being left uncovered with doilies and flowers." He made an effort to get it changed before Roosevelt emerged from the washroom but aborted the bid when he discovered there were no doilies.

The Ottawa visit was the last time that King was to see his friend, the president, in reasonably healthy condition. At the second Quebec Conference in September 1944, which was the next time they were together, King was shocked. While Churchill was "fresh as a baby," Roosevelt had lost thirty pounds and was worn out physically and mentally. King, however, worried most about his own mental deficiencies. Listening to Churchill and Roosevelt he would grow sad that he hadn't mastered history as he should have, that he hadn't kept more contacts with important men, that he had been far too much of a recluse: "It is a great opportunity of life largely missed.... I continuously deplore not having been able to keep up with the events in different countries and not being more familiar with the history of Canada. I am woefully ignorant of questions on which I should be best informed, when associating with the President and Mr. Churchill."

But he was always confident of his political judgment and passed on advice that Roosevelt heeded. Before the presidential election of 1944, the president wanted a conference on the division of post-war Europe with the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin. Pointedly, King warned that it would be a mistake. Rather than risk a failed conference, he said, make a campaign promise to have one afterward. Much less of a gamble, King told him.

Roosevelt won yet again and a few months later King had an election to think about, needed political help, and set out for Washington to get it. The State Department alerted Roosevelt to the real reason for the meeting: "Prime Minister King comes to Washington tried by the animosities aroused by the conscription issue in

Canada and on the eve of an election campaign which will be very tough indeed. He is seeking to rebuild his prestige and thus may want to meet the press here and capitalize discreetly on his friendship with you. As you know, Canadians would have voted for you to a man last November."

Roosevelt was only happy to oblige. "I would like to see him get more publicity," he told dinner guests days before the visit. The president had been through ten years with King as his neighbouring head of state and his relationship with him had been smoother and happier than with any foreign leader. With the warm rapport had come accomplishment. Canadians not inclined toward stronger continental ties would not see the many agreements as accomplishments, but men such as Cordell Hull regarded the relationship with Canada through those troubled years as being nothing short of the highlight.

"Throughout my twelve years at the State Department," said the secretary, "no sector of our foreign policy gave me more satisfaction or brought more fruitful results than our relations with Canada. In 1933 cooperation between the two countries had sagged to a low point; the depression, the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, and the Ottawa agreements had slashed their trade, and there was no adequate expression of the natural identity of the two countries, especially in the strategic and economic spheres. As I left office we had built a solid economic relationship through two trade agreements and a truly wonderful industrial cooperation during the war; we had assured the strategic interdependence of the two countries through the establishment of the Permanent Joint Board of Defense; and our relations in general had increased in extent and importance. They offered to the world the highest example of nations, bordering on each other and cherishing the same free institutions, working together for their mutual advantage."

King arrived at the White House a month before Franklin Roosevelt would die of a cerebral hemorrhage. The prime minister kissed him on the cheek and the usual confusion followed about the sofa, the right ear, and a chair directly across. At first King felt good about the president's appearance, but as the discussion wore on, he noticed that Roosevelt was repeating the same stories, that his eyes were not square, that he was thinking only on the surface, and that he was taking credit for things he didn't do. Pearson had visited Roosevelt earlier and been appalled by his condition. King felt that he had

"pretty well lost his spring," but Roosevelt himself was thinking of the future. "Three years from now when I am through here I am thinking of setting up a newspaper which will be about the size of four pages of *foolscap*." It would have no editorials, he said, but just report the news truthfully and be distributed in every city in the country for the price of one cent.

King left the White House on Saturday, March 10 for a couple of days rest in Williamsburg, Virginia, but stopped by again on his way back to Canada. Roosevelt was having a press conference on March 13 and he wanted the prime minister there. King didn't want to go through the pressure of answering questions but wished to attend in order to pick up any available publicity points. Roosevelt, doing his last favour for the prime minister, told him to just come and sit there. He did and Roosevelt spoke at length to the press of the friendship, of the accords that had been reached and of the personal relationship that had translated into concrete achievements. "He spoke," wrote King, "as if I had been at the White House right along." The press reports in Canada were glowing.

The last conversation with the president was about politics. Roosevelt said if there was any way he could help in the election he would do it. King said that he did not think he would win, that he might even lose his own constituency. The president told him not to worry, that he felt he would be victorious.

In the late Ottawa afternoon of April 12 while he was being massaged, Mackenzie King was informed that Roosevelt had died. His reaction, curiously, was unemotional: "I seemed too exhausted and fatigued to feel any strong emotion. It all seemed like part of the day's heavy work. Just one more in fact. I was almost too tired to think of what, in the circumstances, I would be called upon to do."

Lester Pearson, ambassador to Washington, wrote the tribute on behalf of his country. "My country is Canada. We Canadians knew the President well and he knew us. He was, in fact, closer to us in a sense than any other President ever was. He spent his summers on our shores. He fished our northern streams. His fireside talks were heard in our homes. His ringing declarations lighted our hearts. He understood our problems and our possibilities."

On Sunday, April 15, Prime Minister King arrived in Hyde Park for the burial ceremony. "The fields were green," he noticed, "the little leaves were coming out on the trees, birds were singing. Many

shrubs were already in bloom. Some blossoms on the trees. The sun shining brightly, the air fresh and balmy. It really filled one's soul with a feeling of delight.

"There came to my mind as we drove along the lines from the darkey song: 'When the birds were singing in the morning and the myrtle and ivory were in bloom and the sun on the hill was adorning, oh, it was then that we laid him in the tomb.'"

At the grave site, the prime minister, worried that he was wearing the wrong style hat, stood near Harry Truman, whose head was lowered. King had a wreath and, as the mourners gathered around the burial plot, he unwrapped it, left his coat and hat with Edward Stettinius, the secretary of state, and walked alone toward the grave. He stood motionless for a moment, dropped the flowers beside the bier, and walked slowly back. A man in charge of a motion picture crew came forward and asked King to do it again because it would make an excellent shot. King, encouraged by Stettinius, walked slowly to the bier again. He picked up the flowers and placed them down again. He returned slowly to his place among the mourners.

CHAPTER TEN

Life with Harry

WHEN HARRY TRUMAN, the haberdasher from Missouri, assumed the presidency in 1945, the United States held Canada in esteem. "Canada has developed during the war years into a nation of importance," the State Department asserted in a memo to the new president. "Her eleven and a half million people have demonstrated remarkable productive capacities and she has put a million men in uniform.... The strength of Canada's overseas armies was particularly remarkable." The Dominion had "played an effective and important role" in conferences establishing the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund and in providing international relief. The Canadian delegation at the United Nations Conference was a "conspicuously able group."¹

The memorandum declared that Canada had now reached the status of "a leading Middle Power." In respect to U.S. interests, the country was playing a "useful, constructive role." The Canadian government, it said, "is quick to respond to considerate treatment by the United States, is sensitive to public opinion in this country, is anxious to stand on its own feet, paying its own way, but is naturally inclined to resent any situations in which Canada is taken for granted or overlooked entirely."

Truman was given a frank assessment of Prime Minister King: "As a speaker and a writer he is lacking the essential gifts of clarity, force

and ease. On the floor of the House he is a past master at evasion in answering questions but in rough and tumble debate he scores many more points than he loses. He is primarily a student. He is a bachelor and devotes a large part of his leisure to reading and abstract thinking.

“... He dislikes publicity; avoids giving interviews and, in his occasional press conferences, is not only uninformative but over-polite to the point of seeming disingenuous. He is intensely loyal to his friends though quite willing to laugh at their foibles.” Summing up, the State officials said the prime minister enjoyed little personal popularity but will “go down in history as a statesman.”

Had the same officials who wrote flatteringly of Canada and interestingly of its leader seen what the powers in Ottawa were saying about Harry Truman, their reviews might have had a different tone. Lord Athlone, governor-general of the Dominion, spared no mercy in telling King what he thought of the beloved Roosevelt's replacement. Truman was, in his words, “a crook.”² King acknowledged in his journal that “some persons have been seeking to convey that impression.” His own view was not that he was a criminal but an inexperienced low brow, probably not up to the job.

Ambassador Lester Pearson shared the concerns. As vice-president, Truman had made him feel he had about as much status as an ambassador from “Upper Ruritania.” He kept Pearson waiting for an hour for an appointment, seated with a peanut-chewing Missouri friend of the president's who was later charged with influence peddling. In the meeting Pearson was interrupted by the unannounced entrance of a senator who condescendingly assured him that, as usual, everything was fine with Canada. At the next encounter, a reception for Truman, the vice-president cracked a series of stag-party one-liners that Pearson found “more vulgar than funny.” Truman then took to the piano with a sexy young actress who dangled more public leg than Pearson was used to seeing in 1945. “I was not amused or impressed. I thought, ‘can this man rise to the awesome responsibilities likely to fall on him so soon?’”³

With Roosevelt gone, King realized he could not maintain the influence he had in Washington. Truman, who called the War of 1812 “the silliest damn war we ever had,” knew little about Canada, had no previous contact, and seemingly cared little. Initially suspicious of him, King told his cabinet that he believed “the long range policy of the Americans was to absorb Canada. They would seek to get this hemisphere as completely one as possible.”

The times were momentous. The United States suddenly stood unchallenged as the world's number one military and economic power. The rest of the world was so crippled from the War that Canada now stood fourth. The atomic bomb, the ultimate horror weapon, had been discovered, with Canada playing a significant role. A new world economic order and organization was in place. A multilateral free-trade movement was nascent. The globe was being severely split into communist and capitalist camps. The United Nations was in place, and soon there would be NATO and the Marshall Plan.

These vast changes meant that the mandate of the United States was no longer just the defence and the economic health of the continent, but the defence and the economic health of the noncommunist world. Relations with Canada had to be squeezed into this new perspective, and into the perspective of a stronger, self-assertive Canada. In 1931 the Statute of Westminster had put the Dominion on the same level as Britain in essential status, but not in function. But with its imposing performance in war and diplomacy, Canada was now functioning at the same level as well. Britain was no longer its military and economic protector, the United States having assumed the role. The FDR years saw the forging of a greater economic alliance with Canada through the liberalized trade and Hyde Park agreements and the dawning of a defence alliance with the Ogdensburg pact. The Truman administration leaned toward a further strengthening of both, a greater integration of the continent. MacKenzie King, now more infirmed by age, unable to maintain concentration over an extended period, was leaning toward a more isolationist Canada of the type he led before the war. He was less trustful of America without Roosevelt, wary of its new super-power status, tremulous over the advent of the atomic age. His cabinet and the shining breed of civil servants Canada was producing at this time were inclined in opposite directions—toward internationalism, collective security, and a closer relationship with Washington.

King spent his remaining three years as prime minister with Truman in Washington (St. Laurent dealt with the president for the following four). The first private meeting of King and Truman came seven weeks after one of the first of so many momentous decisions Truman would make—detonating the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, marking the first and only occasion on which nuclear bombs have been used. The Hiroshima blast, August 5, 1945, killed

roughly 100,000 people. The Nagasaki detonation, four days later, left 50,000 dead and historians perplexed over the rationale. Was not the first A-bomb and the threat of more enough to drive the Japanese to surrender? King feared that Truman did not fully grasp the horrific revolutionary nature of the new bomb. The prime minister, along with British leader Attlee, were the only two heads of state in the world to know in advance of the United States' plan to go nuclear. President Roosevelt told King during the Canadian's last visit in March of the decision and that August would be the likely date. The early consultation was in recognition of Canada's contribution to the building of the bomb and as a supplier of the vital ingredient—uranium. In the Quebec conferences, King, Churchill, and Roosevelt had reached an agreement on the development and use of atomic energy which, when later scrutinized by Truman, distressed him greatly. Among other things it required the United States to gain British permission before using the bomb. "Byrnes [secretary of state] and I discussed the Roosevelt agreement with Churchill and MacKenzie King on the Atomic Energy Program," Truman noted in his diary. "It is a mess. No one seems to have thought the thing would work out as it has. So I am the heir to a hell of a mess." He was somewhat consoled by the fact that the vast amounts of money spent on the development of the weapon produced something. "But I'm not blaming anyone. Suppose that 2 billion, 600 million dollars had been spent in vain. What a terrible mess that would have been! So let's be thankful for what we have."

On the day before the Hiroshima explosion, King wrote of the pending event: "It makes one very sad at heart to think of the loss of life that it will occasion among innocent people as well as those that are guilty. It can only be justified through the knowledge that for one life destroyed, it may save hundreds of thousands and bring this terrible war quickly to a close."

On the day after Hiroshima: "Naturally it created mixed feelings in my mind and heart. We were now within sight of the end of the war with Japan... We now see what might have come to the British people had German scientists won the race. It is fortunate that the use of the bomb should have been upon the Japanese rather than upon the white races of Europe."

Before the prime minister could confer with Truman on atomic energy, he learned of another stunning development, this one even

closer to home. In early September, Igor Gouzenko, an employee of Ottawa's Soviet embassy, appeared at the offices of King's top officials and revealed the existence of a Soviet espionage ring. The Soviets, fair-weather allies with the West in the war, had been moving away but few had suspected this and King was alarmed, fearing that secrets to the production of the bomb may have been stolen.

The revelation, along with the bomb, absolutely compelled a meeting with Truman but owing to the skittishness which accompanied King's detour it almost never came off. The two leaders had talked briefly at the United Nations founding conference in San Francisco in the spring and Truman had invited King to the White House in June. But King was in an election campaign and the public relations value of a visit with the unproven president was deemed insufficient for the trip. Now, Truman wanted King to fly in Friday, September 28, spend the night in the White House and, since the president had a long-standing engagement in Missouri on Sunday, fly home on Saturday. King, however, had an important debate to attend in Parliament on Friday. Moreover, he didn't want to fly to Washington because he was going to be flying to London to see Prime Minister Attlee. He didn't like to do too much flying at once. He was over seventy.

Truman was so informed, stewed for a while, and decided he would be gracious enough to cancel his Missouri trip so that King wouldn't have to miss Friday's debates. King then determined he would not fly to Washington under any circumstances. He would take a train which would leave Friday night and arrive late Saturday. But then it was discovered that the trip would require the transfer of his railway car in New York at an additional cost of three hundred dollars. Outraged, King cancelled his train ticket. The biggest spy story in decades was demanding urgent action but the prime minister of Canada, a man of Scottish blood, was not about to spend an extra three hundred dollars to see to it.

King telephoned American ambassador Ray Atherton to give him the news. Too much money, he said. The expenditure might touch off a scandal. Can't go. Atherton, fuming, said that surely the excursion could be arranged in such a way that no one would know about the extra three hundred dollars. But King was intransigent. "I told him these things should not and could not likely be concealed. At any rate, I would take no chances." Norman Robertson, the highly regarded

deputy minister of External Affairs, intervened to plead with the prime minister that it would be absolutely crazy to let the small amount of money get in the way of such an important matter. But King again held ground. "I told him I did not wish my reputation to be damaged by any false step."

Truman, becoming perplexed about this man, now un-cancelled his Missouri venture, deciding that if King couldn't make it by early Saturday, there would be no meeting. The prime minister would not change his mind on the train problem, but finally under considerable pressure resolved that, if the weather was excellent, he would fly down Saturday morning. It was and the Washington departure crisis finally concluded.

The hope expressed immediately as the two leaders sat down in the rather empty executive mansion, was that what had begun with King and Roosevelt could continue with King and Truman. Truman had been pleased with King's re-election, writing him about what a "source of deep gratification" it was for Americans. "We rejoice." The prime minister replied that his relationship with FDR was an important factor in the victory.

They referred to the spy matter as the Corby case, because the files on it were kept in a Corby's whiskey box. After a lengthy briefing from the prime minister, Truman emphasized repeatedly that he hoped King would take no unilateral action on Corby, that the two of them must get together with Attlee to work out a strategy, and that nothing should be done without consensus among the three. Ten Downing Street was suspected of wanting faster action—public disclosure and arrests—but Truman's recommendation was soft music for King. With advanced age had come advanced insecurity. His confidence was now so frail that he didn't feel up to the job. "I am too weary to meet situations as they arise," he wrote in his diary that fall. "The things that I was wholly familiar with this afternoon I could not find strength to express. This is a condition which no responsible leader should be in in times like the present." On Corby he didn't want to have to act alone.

Under questioning from Truman, he disclosed that the espionage net likely extended into the top level of the State Department. Truman did not react with great surprise. He wanted to get all the information possible, but the deferential prime minister, fearing he was taking up too much of the president's precious time, kept getting up as if it was

time to leave. Truman, after the third or fourth flagrant King gesture, assented, suggesting that a further meeting to include Attlee was necessary.

The new parley was scheduled for the second week of November. Along with the espionage matter, the future of atomic energy joined the agenda. This was a subject the dire importance of which was fully understood by Mackenzie King. From England he wrote that he would return to the continent "ready to enter on a larger sphere of work than ever—a sphere of work which will identify me with this new age of atomic energy and world peace. It is the thing that I am sure is a part of the purpose of my life. All that I get from my own inner feeling through psychic sources etc. stresses this very clearly."

To Lester Pearson the meaning of the meeting was clear as well. A force that could destroy the world had been unleashed on it. A way had to be found to control that force. One of the days of the summit was Armistice Day, and for Pearson it "could never have been more relevant. I had not missed an Armistice Day silence since 1919 but never had the two minutes seemed so long, so pregnant with meaning, so evocative of memories or so challenging to a renewed and more resolute search for a better world."⁴

In damp, cool weather the leaders and their assistants boarded the yacht *Sequoia*, normally the venue for Truman's around-the-clock poker games, and sat around the green felt card table. After his annihilation of Japanese cities, Truman had written King thanking him for Canada's part in "this most terrific of wars." Now he asked the seven people around the table to speak in turn on what could be done to ensure that atomic energy would never again be used for destructive purposes.

King, whose diary account of these Washington days has never been found, stated his position, but Pearson felt compelled to elaborate. "I could... not resist the opportunity to plead for a deep and broad international effort through the United Nations to control this new and final threat to human survival, an effort which must be made before other atomic powers appeared. I emphasized as strongly as I could what seemed to be so obvious, that we could prevent global catastrophe only by global agreement of an unprecedented character, and that this would undoubtedly require some delegation of sovereign rights to a supranational agency."

The discussion was discursive, but there was agreement on the need

for international rather than trilateral action. Each side then wrote a draft of a suggested agreement and, with Prime Minister King playing a leading role in the final alterations, the three were combined into one. The major principles of the joint Declaration on Atomic Energy were that Canada, the United States, and Britain would share scientific information on the atom with other nations; that specialized information, which could lead to the development of the bomb, would be withheld; and that an international control commission would be established at the United Nations.

King was enthusiastic. He told Truman a great service had been rendered mankind. The president was encouraged as well. "The more I think about it, the better I like it." The principles embodied in the declaration were put forward at the United Nations but an agreement could not be secured with the Soviets, who wanted all stocks of atomic weapons destroyed within three months, and an international convention prohibiting production of all such weapons instituted. The United States, the possessor of a distinct military advantage because of the atomic capability, was not prepared to go that far. And of the poker-table agreement of 1945, Pearson was later left to muse: "These were fine words and noble sentiments. There was a solemn warning in them but there was to be little effective action to follow. Have they become merely the expression of another 'might-have-been' of history? Today the answer seems to be 'yes' and it could mean humanity's greatest and final failure."⁵

The spread of bomb technology was not controlled, nor was the effectiveness of Soviet espionage. Highly secret yacht talks led to an agreement on coordinated police action, although diplomatic relations with the Soviets were maintained. In Canada a royal commission was appointed and arrests made. Public reaction to the disclosures was vehement, the spy case becoming a catalyst in the genesis of the Cold War. Lewis Clark, an American official in the Ottawa embassy, reported to Washington: "At the moment the Canadians are like the brave little boy who has talked back to the bully [Russians] and is wondering what is going to happen to him."

The bully managed fine without having to retaliate. By 1950 when more Russian spying was uncovered, the Soviets had stolen enough secrets to develop their own atom bomb and, by 1954, the more powerful hydrogen bomb.

From the continental standpoint, the meetings in the autumn of

1945 at least produced some harmony out of a King-Truman relationship that had begun without promise. Following the *Sequoia* Conference, the prime minister was impressed enough to send the president a rare token of appreciation—one of his treasured dog pictures. "I should feel deeply honoured Mr. President if you would accept as a slight remembrance of this visit, and the events of the past week, the somewhat intimate photograph of myself and my old dog, Pat." It was, he pointed out, one of FDR's favourites.

"Your picture will occupy a place of honor in my study," Truman responded and, unless his wife Bess was diplomatically devious, he meant it. Two years later, Bess took King aside during a state visit to Ottawa. She told him that whenever the maids mixed up the photos on her mantle, the president would always make a point of rescuing the picture of King and Pat to the foreground. King was most gratified. He raved about it in his diary.

For Truman the most important aspect of relations with Canada was the planning and application of joint defence measures. A White House memorandum put the case simply to Truman in 1946. "Two world wars have demonstrated that an aggressor must destroy the power of North America or be defeated. Due to post 1945 technological advances, North America is no longer adequately protected by geography. Canadian and United States military advisers agree that in five years North America must be prepared to meet major enemy capabilities." The Americans wanted to integrate as much as possible Canadian military methods and planning but Dean Acheson, the deputy secretary of state, whose parents were from Toronto, realized there would be problems. "In view of Canada's traditional close association with the United Kingdom," he told the president, "the shift to an even closer association with the United States armed forces is a matter of great moment in Canada and one which involves considerable political risk for the present government. Some Canadians fear we would encroach on their own sovereignty and some fear that Canada might ultimately have to withdraw from the British Commonwealth."

But the Pentagon, as Acheson added, was "insistent on closing the gap between Alaska and Greenland and on pushing the defense of our industrial centers north of our own border. For this we are dependent on the cooperation of the Canadian Government." On the Pentagon's list of requirements were an air defence system to include bases in

Canada and meteorological and early warning communications facilities.

Ottawa officials were somewhat sympathetic, but not convinced of the immediacy of the Soviet threat. King, feeling that Canada was to be "a mere pawn in the world conflict," wanted to maintain strong defence links with Britain to avoid total reliance on Washington.

The prime minister had worried all along that, having established a military presence in Canada during the war, the Americans would be reluctant to dismantle it after the war. He had talked once to Vincent Massey about the process of disentanglement and Massey recalled that "The PM showed he had grave doubts as to whether international agreements on this which Canada had secured from the United States provided any practical guarantee against the United States' claims and pretensions. When I suggested that the Americans did not take us seriously enough as a nation, King said that Canadians were looked upon by Americans as a lot of Eskimos...."

In October 1945 King wrote that "If the Americans felt security required it" they "would take peaceful possession of part of Canada with a welcome of the people of BC, Alta., and Saskatchewan...." He was apprehensive about the loyalty of his western provinces. "I felt perfectly sure that once the Western provinces became alarmed in the matter of their security, they would look to the United States for protection, not to Canada or the Commonwealth."

In a wire to the State Department, ambassador Atherton labelled King's suspicions about American motives "traditional caution," adding that unfortunately the prime minister's control was such that he dragged the views of his cabinet and chiefs of staff with him. His recommendation was to have Truman meet King and "...assure Canada that joint defense with the United States will not lead to withdrawal from the Commonwealth."

In a White House session with King in October of 1946, Truman pushed his case for an American Air Force bomber base at Goose Bay, Labrador. King first pointed out that Labrador belonged to Newfoundland which was not, at the time, a Canadian province. He said he understood that the United States was thinking of stationing 10,000 men in Goose Bay and this would cause many Canadians to fear an infringement of their sovereignty. Truman argued that all he was trying to do was make aggression impossible anywhere but he was unable to move the prime minister, it being a meeting in which the

most concrete development was that there should be another meeting. Truman, a man who could be blunt in his appraisals, a president who would later refer to Richard Nixon as "Squirrel Head," was not dismayed, however. "Mr. King was here last week," he wrote his mother a few days later. "He is an honest man. I can always get along with an honest man." The prime minister was also impressed, finding the Truman style most effective: "His whole appearance is that of a business executive who has himself well in hand, completely in training. He has a very disarming smile, very deep dimple in his right cheek when he smiles. Eyes kindly and sympathetic yet strong."⁶

A few months after the meeting, post-war principles of defence cooperation were enunciated, the outcome being a compromise falling short of the degree of integration Washington sought. Canada took the position that the granting of permanent or long-term rights to the United States for defence installations on Canadian soil was undesirable.

Nonetheless King wanted a favour from Truman. He would soon be celebrating his twentieth anniversary as prime minister and, for this "crowning event" as he called it, he wanted the president to come to Ottawa in June 1947. To lobby, he stopped by the White House following a vacation in Williamsburg, Virginia. Having left his advisers behind he hoped Truman would reciprocate so that he could have a one-on-one session. But an aide joined the president, leading King to grumble in his journal that Americans always like to have a third man present. "I do not think that as between the President and the Prime Minister that sort of thing is necessary."

The pitch to the president was that "the plain people" of Canada wanted to see him and cheer for him because he was courageous and fearless. To this, Truman responded: "I only try to do what is right; not to trouble about anything else." King's philosophy was somewhat different. He once told Pearson on a train trip to Washington that the secret of politics was not to do what is right but to avoid doing what is wrong. Pearson told the story to James Reston, and Reston never forgot it.⁷

King's second line to Truman was standard poetic excess. He said that the president's presence for his twentieth anniversary celebration would constitute such a sensation that he would then be prepared to part the world in peace. These blandishments were successful, and on June 10, 1947 Truman became the second president to come to

Ottawa. To mark the anniversary, the prime minister scheduled a portrait of himself to be unveiled in the Parliament buildings as the president looked on. A portrait of former Prime Minister Robert Borden was also to be unveiled. The governor-general, Viscount Alexander, would do the honours.

With an air of solemn dignity, the gushing preliminary statements were read. With the bespectacled Truman watching carefully, the call went out first for the unveiling of the Borden portrait. The governor-general, his grandeur appropriate for the occasion, walked gingerly to the covered picture as the sense of anticipation grew. He drew the cord and the wrong portrait appeared.

The governor-general, despite a rehearsal earlier in the day, had been led to the wrong spot and accidentally exposed the picture of King instead of Borden. The master of ceremonies turned deadly white. Viscount Alexander was led to the other portrait and this time Borden was unveiled. The master of ceremonies apologized for what had happened. There were apologies all round. Prime Minister King's great moment, the moment which was supposed to prepare him to leave the earth peacefully, was terribly tarnished. The unveiling of his portrait was re-enacted. There was a nice round of applause.

Otherwise, the Truman visit was a splendid success. The president was greeted by large, genuinely enthusiastic crowds. As he strode up the main walk to the Parliament on a sparkling morning, the band played the Missouri Waltz, his favourite tune. In a marvellous expression of friendship, the president and the prime minister joined arms and, to the delight of the sun-drenched thousands, began to skip along to the beat. It was a grand departure from King's normally strict behaviour, and inside he had another surprise. When Truman finished his speech, King brought him back to face the audience, and called for three cheers for the president: "Hip-hip-hoorah!" the House thundered. Hip-hip-hoorah! "Never in my life have I received such a cordial welcome as I had from your Parliament this morning," Truman told a luncheon. "You were kind to me. I have heard of people receiving three cheers and a tiger but it never happened to me before."

There were no immediate controversial issues. The visit was an exhibition of friendship. Truman praised the wisdom of King in his speech to Parliament. He said the unveiling ceremony was "wonderful." He lauded the Canadian war effort as "magnificent," and he

said there was a lot more than luck to the Canada-U.S. friendship: "The example of accord provided by our two countries did not come about merely through the happy circumstance of geography. It is compounded of one part proximity and nine parts good will and common sense."

Canadians, he said, were broad in mind and broad in spirit. Americans "find that the composition of your population and the evolution of your political institutions hold a lesson for the other nations of the earth. Canada has achieved internal unity and material strength, and has grown in stature in the world community by solving problems that might have hopelessly divided and weakened a less gifted people."

The two leaders had a press conference at Montebello, Quebec. Truman sat down under a tree and said, "Let's have a drink." He asked for bourbon and branch water, his favourite. Someone told him there was no branch water, but Truman said not to worry about it, that he had brought his own. While the prime minister stayed dry and in the background, the president drank and fielded the questions. "I sincerely hope that Canadians will pay us a visit," said Truman. There isn't a chance in the world of our being able to give them the sort of reception that they have given me, but we do the best we can.... The United States has but one objective in view and that is peace in the world and friendship with every nation in the world. And underline that every."

His daughter, Margaret Truman, accompanied the president on the three-day stop and was effusive in a later description. "The Prime Minister, Mackenzie King," she said in words which would have shocked many, "was one of the most charming statesman I have ever met, with a delicious sense of humor. We loved the old world charm of Ottawa. It was like a trip to London with only one-tenth the trouble."

In the same year, the prime minister, facing a dollar crisis similar to the one in 1941 which had prompted Hyde Park, began quietly, very quietly, to work toward the establishment of a free-trade area with the United States. It was one of the most top-secret negotiations in bilateral history. King appointed a small group of Finance Department officials to try and negotiate an agreement. They were to report directly to him. The Department of External Affairs was kept in the dark. A similarly shrouded group was set up in the Truman administration and by early 1948 a comprehensive agreement was produced.

It was, the Canadian team felt, a close approximation of what the prime minister wanted. It would now have to be approved by the U.S. Congress, and an agreement as sweeping as the one in 1911 would be on the books; Canada and the United States would take the lead in the free-trade fever Washington was trying to spread and Canada would be given a five-year head start on some central aspects. Goods flowing unencumbered across the forty-ninth would likely mean less need for American multinationals to set up branch plants in Canada to circumvent tariff walls. Simon Reisman, the future deputy minister of Finance, who was then a young man working for the director of the Canadian negotiating team, would come to regard the agreement as potentially the most important bilateral development of the post-war period.⁸

But even though it was embraced enthusiastically by the prime minister's men, it was not to come about. At the last moment Mackenzie King turned cold. He remembered 1911; he feared for the political ramifications; he thought the limited time before the 1948 presidential election would create problems; and he feared the American intent was still to annex Canada. He explained to his disappointed negotiators that it was too much of a gamble: "I pointed out that the issue was very large. That it unquestionably came back to what the future of Canada either in the British Commonwealth or as part of the U.S. will be. I said I felt sure that the long objective of the Americans was to control this continent. They would want to get Canada under their aegis. If I was an American, I would have the same view especially considering Russia's position etc. On the other hand I did not feel we would be as well off as a State of the Union as we will be possibly as the greatest of self governing portions of the British Commonwealth of Nations."

No public disclosure was made of the negotiation. The prime minister left no trace of having dealt personally with the president on the matter. Although Reisman was under the impression that the negotiations had the president's blessings, Truman left no evidence of personal involvement. The two leaders were clashing at the time, not over trade, but Korea. The country, under Japanese rule from 1910 to 1945, was divided into communist and non-communist areas and the issue was how to set free and fair elections. While King was out of the country, St. Laurent, his External Affairs minister, indicated that Canada would be willing to serve on a United Nations commission to

supervise the campaign. But King, reflecting his new isolationist posture, returned angered, feeling that such a commission would only increase tensions between Moscow and Washington, and lead Canada into a faraway crisis he didn't need.

He sent Pearson to explain his views to Truman. Pearson, who regarded this assignment as one of his most difficult ever, was told by the president: "Don't worry. You won't get into any trouble over there. And if you do we are behind you." The latter part was just what King would not want to hear. "If I had repeated that comment," wrote Pearson, "our prime minister would have considered that his worst fears had been realized."

The Canadian ambassador wanted Truman to telephone King to allay his concerns and settle the matter but Truman wouldn't do it. He was afraid the prime minister would get the better of him. The reason, Jack Hickerson of the State Department told Pearson, was that Truman simply didn't know much about the Korean situation. The president chose instead to write a letter:

"I am deeply concerned over the possibility that Canada's failure to appoint a representative on the Korean Commission would be misunderstood and distorted out of all proportion to the modest importance of this temporary agency. I am fearful that it might be seized upon by persons in this country and elsewhere who are anxious to find grounds for opposing cooperative efforts to resolve urgent political and economic problems which confront the world and which must be solved if western civilization is to endure. I need hardly add that the U.S.S.R. would exploit Canada's absence to the fullest in its propaganda."

King was furious. He called Pearson away from a U.N. security council session, told him Truman was wrong, and instructed him to return to Ottawa. The prime minister then prepared a stiff reply to the president. "It is I think the first time I have quite emphatically declined to meet a wish expressed by any President of the United States," he said. His letter told the president that the commission idea was a mistake, that it would draw U.N. members into a position of "great future embarrassment."

St. Laurent, King's star cabinet member, was compromised. He told Jack Pickersgill: "I may not be in the government tomorrow."⁹ Pearson, however, persuaded St. Laurent to have dinner with the prime minister. A solution was found. Canada would serve on the

commission but would withdraw if it became apparent that Soviet cooperation in the elections was not forthcoming. King pulled back on the Truman letter and send a response of a different kind, a response which was still strong enough to please Pearson, who commented: "It will show the Americans that we are not going to be pushed around by them on security council matters."

The tempest did not seriously aggravate the King-Truman relationship, one which maintained much of the bilateral good will generated under FDR. They met for the last time at the beautiful William and Mary College in Williamsburg, in April 1948, to receive honorary degrees. With the crisis brewing in Berlin, Truman told King conditions were as serious as in 1939. King concluded: "If we escape war before this month is over or next at the latest, it will be a miracle." They spoke briefly about the upcoming presidential election. Truman, far behind in the polls, said that he was going to fight "for all he was worth." He would "kick those other fellows yet."¹⁰

When he did just that, stunning the pundits, Mackenzie King retired, leaving the reigns of power to Quebec's Louis St. Laurent, the urbane lawyer who said after the first meeting of the United Nations General Assembly: "We have advanced from barbarism to a sort of international feudalism." A brisk, direct man, he was respectful in his dealings with Truman, then Eisenhower, but never lawning and seldom deferential. He didn't believe in doing things for the sake of appearance. He didn't try to use the presidents for political capital back home. The relationship between Canadians and Americans struck him as something extraordinary. "Like farmers whose hands have a common concession line we think of ourselves as settling from day to day questions that arise between us without dignifying the process by the word 'policy.'" He had little to do with Truman, meeting with him only twice in four years. Their limited relationship was one of mutual respect. St. Laurent objected strongly to the notion of Canada being taken for granted and in Pearson he had a diplomat who was seldom hesitant to sound off on the subject. "There will be difficulties and frictions," Pearson said in 1951 in one of his most brusque appraisals. "These however will be easier to settle if the United States realizes that while we are most anxious to work with her and support her in the leadership she is giving the free world, we are not willing to be merely an echo of somebody else's voice.... It would also help if the United States took more notice of what we do and indeed of what we say. It is disconcerting for example that about the

only time the American people seem to be aware of our existence, in contrast to say, the existence of a Latin American republic, is when we do something that they do not like, or do not do something they would like."

Multilaterally, the Korean War proved the toughest test to the Canada-U.S. relationship in the St. Laurent-Truman period. But while King and Roosevelt tended to handle state-to-state relations personally, the style of diplomacy changed with Truman and St. Laurent. The new president and prime minister had minimum contact on the war, leaving the weaving to the men from their respective inner circles.

Although Canada had been one of the staunchest proponents of U.N. collective action during the formation of the body, the St. Laurent government stirred resentment in Washington through its reluctance and procrastination to commit ground forces to the combat zone. Three weeks after the June 1950 invasion of South Korea by the North, Ottawa had provided only three destroyers for stand-by duty in Far East waters. To Pearson's assertion that they represented "no mere token" assistance, an American embassy official replied: "Okay, let's call it three tokens."¹¹

The Canadian government had waited for years in World War I and in World War II for American participation and, reflecting the omnipresent Canadian sensitivity to the hint of being pushed around by the White House, the St. Laurent government was not prepared to jump into the Korean conflict when Truman said jump. It wasn't until August that a Canadian brigade was contributed and throughout the war the Canadian effort was to rein in the Americans. When the North Koreans retreated, the Pentagon advocated pursuing them into the North, but St. Laurent was more conciliatory, urging that the North Koreans be given the opportunity of entering into a cease-fire. The prime minister and his foreign policy establishment shuddered when Truman suggested at a press conference in November 1950 that General Douglas MacArthur had the authority to use nuclear weapons in the conflict if he so desired. Pearson was quickly to the podium with a stern warning that the consequences of such an action would be disastrous. The Canadians also fought Washington, in vain, to prevent a White House introduction of a resolution declaring the Chinese guilty of aggression. But because St. Laurent chose to place much more confidence and responsibility in his associates than King, because of his more detached, imperial style of operating, any acrimony over